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THE  
L I F E  
AND  
POSTHUMOUS WRITINGS  
OF  
*WILLIAM COWPER, Esq.*









William Cowper

THE  
L I F E  
AND *Saml. Miller.*  
POSTHUMOUS WRITINGS  
OF  
WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

WITH AN  
INTRODUCTORY LETTER  
TO THE  
*RIGHT HONOURABLE EARL COWPER.*

BY WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

“ *Obversatur oculis ille vir, quo neminem atas nostra graviorem, sanctiorem, subtiliorem denique tulit: quem ego quum ex admiratione diligere cœpissem, quod evenire contra solet, magis admiratus sum, postquam penitus inspexi. Inspexi enim penitus: nihil a me ille secretum, non jocularè, non scrium, non triste, non lætum.*”

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# CONTENTS

OF THE

## FIRST VOLUME.

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### INTRODUCTORY Letter.

*The Life, Part the First*—the Family, Birth, and first Residence of Cowper—his Eulogy on the Tenderness of his Mother, pages 1, 2. Her Portrait—her Epitaph by her Niece, 2, 3. The Schools that Cowper attended—his Sufferings in Childhood, 4, 5, 6. Leaves Westminster, and is stationed in the House of an Attorney, 6, 7. Verses on his early Afflictions, 7, 8. Settles in the Inner Temple—his Acquaintance with eminent Authors, 8. His Epistle to Lloyd, 9. His Translations in Duncombe's Horace, 11. His own Account of his early Life, 11. Stanzas on reading Sir Charles Grandison, 12. Verses written at Bath, 1748—his Nomination to the Office of Reading Clerk in the House of Lords, 13, 14. His extreme dread of appearing in Public, 15. His Health deranged—his Retirement to the House of Dr. Cotton, at St. Alban's, 15. His Recovery, 16. He settles at Huntingdon, to be near his Brother residing in Cambridge, 17. The two Brothers employed on a Translation of Voltaire's *Henriade*, 17. The Origin of Cowper's Acquaintance with the Family of Unwin, 18. He becomes a Part of that Family, 19. His early Friendship with Lord Thurlow and Joseph Hill, Esq. 19.

<i>Letter</i>			<i>Page</i>
1	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	June 24, 1765	20
2	To Major Cowper	Oct. 18, 1765	21
3	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	Oct. 25, 1765	22
4	To Mrs. Cowper	March 11, 1766	23
5	To the same	April 4, 1766	24
6	To the same	April 17, 1766	25
7	To the same	April 18, 1766	27
8	To the same	Sept. 3, 1766	29
9	To the same	Oct. 20, 1766	31
10	To the same	March 11, 1767	32
11	To the same	March 14, 1767	34
12	To the same	April 3, 1767	ib.
13	To the same	July 13, 1767	36
14	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	July 16, 1767	ib.

The Origin of Cowper's Acquaintance with the Rev. Mr. Newton, 37. His Removal with Mrs. Unwin, on the Death of her Husband, to Olney, in Buckinghamshire—his Devotion and Charity in his new Residence, 37.

<i>Letter</i> 15	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	June 16, 1768	<i>Page</i> 38
16	To the same	1769	ib.
A Poem in Memory of John Thornton, Esq. 39. Cowper's Beneficence to a Necessitous Child, 40. Composes a Series of Hymns, 41.			
<i>Letter</i> 17	To Mrs. Cowper	without date	<i>Page</i> 41
18	To the same	Aug. 31, 1769	42
Cowper is hurried to Cambridge by the dangerous Illness of his Brother, 43			
<i>Letter</i> 19	To Mrs. Cowper	March 5, 1770	<i>Page</i> 44
A brief Account of the Rev. John Cowper, who died March 20, 1770—and the Tribute paid to his Memory by his Brother the Poet, 44, 45.			
<i>Letter</i> 20	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	May 8, 1770	<i>Page</i> 46
21	To Mrs. Cowper	June 7, 1770	47
22	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	Sept. 25, 1770	49
The Collection of the Olney Hymns interrupted by the Illness of Cowper, 49. His long and severe Depression—his tame Hares one of his first Amusements on his revival, 50, 51, 52.			
<i>Letter</i> 23	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	May 6, 1780	<i>Page</i> 53
24	To Mrs. Cowper	May 10, 1780	54
25	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	July 8, 1780	ib.
26	To Mrs. Cowper	July 20, 1780	55
27	To the same	Aug. 31, 1780	56
28	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	Dec. 25, 1780	57
29	To the same	Feb. 15, 1781	59
30	To the same	May 9, 1781	60
31	To Mrs. Cowper	Oct. 19, 1781	61
The Publication of his first Volume—not immediately successful—probable Reasons of the Neglect that it seemed for some Time to experience—an Example of the Poet's amiable Ingenuousness in speaking of himself—the various kinds of Excellence in his first Volume, 62 to 65.			

---

## PART THE SECOND.

The Origin of Cowper's Acquaintance with Lady Austin—a Poetical Epistle to that Lady, 67, 68. A Billet to the same Lady, and three Songs, written for her Harpsichord, 71 to 74. She relates to Cowper the Story of John Gilpin, 75.			
<i>Letter</i> 32	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	Feb. 13, 1783	<i>Page</i> 76
33	To the same, enclosing a Letter from Benjamin Franklin	Feb. 20, 1783	ib.
34	To the same	without date	77
35	To the same	May 26, 1783	78
36	To the same	Oct. 20, 1783	ib.
The Origin of the Task, 79. Extracts from Cowper's Letters to the Rev. Mr. Bull, relating to the Progress of that Poem, 79, 80. A sudden end of the Poet's Intercourse with Lady Austin, 81.			

CONTENTS.

vii

<i>Letter</i> 37	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	Sept. 11, 1784	<i>Page</i> 81
38	To the same	without date	82
39	To the same	June 25, 1785	83

The Publication of Cowper's second Volume, in 1785, leads to a renewal of his Correspondence with his Relation, Lady Hesketh, 83.

<i>Letter</i> 40	To Lady Hesketh	Oct. 12, 1785	<i>Page</i> 84
41	To the same	Nov. 9, 1785	86
42	To the same	without date	88
43	To the same	Dec. 24, 1785	89
44	To the same	Jan. 10, 1786	90
45	To the same	Jan. 31, 1786	91
46	To the same	Feb. 9, 1786	93
47	To the same	Feb. 11, 1786	94
48	To the same	Feb. 19, 1786	95
49	To the same	March 6, 1786	98
50	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	April 5, 1786	100
51	To Lady Hesketh	April 17, 1786	101
52	To the same	April 24, 1786	103
53	To the same	May 8, 1786	104
54	To the same	May 15, 1786	107
55	To the same	May 25, 1786	110
56	To the same	May 29, 1786	112
57	To the same	June 4, 1786	114
58	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	June 9, 1786	116
59	To the same	June 9, 1786	117
60	To the same	Oct. 6, 1786	ib.

Cowper receives at Olney his Relation Lady Hesketh, 118. Extracts from his Letters to the Rev. Mr. Bull—Poem on Friendship, from 119 to 128. Extract from the Rev. Mr. Newton's Memoirs of Cowper, 129. The Removal of Mrs. Unwin and Cowper from the Town of Olney to the Village of Weston, 130.

<i>Letter</i> 61	To Lady Hesketh	Nov. 26, 1786	<i>Page</i> 130
62	To the same	Dec. 4, 1786	131
63	To the same	Dec. 9, 1786	133
64	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	Dec. 9, 1786	ib.
65	To Lady Hesketh	Dec. 21, 1786	134
66	To the same	Jan. 8, 1787	135
67	To the same	Jan. 8, 1787	136
68	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	July 24, 1787	137
69	To the same	Aug. 27, 1787	138
70	To Lady Hesketh	Aug. 30, 1787	139
71	To the same	Sept. 4, 1787	140
72	To the same	Sept. 15, 1787	141
73	To the same	Sept. 29, 1787	142
74	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	Oct. 19, 1787	143
75	To Lady Hesketh	Nov. 10, 1787	ib.



		The retired Cat, an occasional Poem, page 144.		
<i>Letter</i>	76	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	Nov. 16, 1787	<i>Page</i> 147
	77	To Lady Hesketh	Nov. 27, 1787	148
	78	To the same	Dec. 4, 1787	149
	79	To the same	Dec. 10, 1787	150
	80	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	Dec. 13, 1787	151
	81	To Lady Hesketh	Jan. 1, 1788	153
	82	To the same	Jan. 19, 1788	154
	83	To the same	Jan. 30, 1788	155
	84	To the same	Feb. 1, 1788	156
	85	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	Feb. 14, 1788	157
	86	To Lady Hesketh	Feb. 16, 1788	159
	87	To the same	Feb. 22, 1788	160
	88	To the same	March 3, 1788	162
	89	To the same	March 12, 1788	163
	90	To General Cowper	Dec. 13, 1787	164
		The Morning Dream, a Ballad, page 164.		
	91	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	March 29, 1788	166
	92	To Lady Hesketh	March 31, 1788	167
	93	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	May 8, 1788	168
	94	To Lady Hesketh	May 12, 1788	ib.
	95	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	May 24, 1788	169
	96	To Lady Hesketh	May 27, 1788	170
	97	To the same	June 3, 1788	171
	98	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	June 8, 1788	172
	99	To Lady Hesketh	June 10, 1788	173
	100	To the same	June 15, 1788	ib.
	101	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	June 23, 1788	174
	102	To Lady Hesketh	July 28, 1788	176
	103	To the same	Aug. 9, 1788	177
	104	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	Aug. 18, 1788	ib.
	105	To the same	Sept. 11, 1788	179
		Two Poems on a favourite Spaniel, page 180.		
	106	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	Sept. 25, 1788	181
	107	To the same	Nov. 30, 1788	182
	108	To the same	Jan. 19, 1789	183
	109	To the same	Jan. 24, 1789	184
	110	To the same	May 20, 1789	ib.
		A Poem on the Queen's Visit to London, the Night of March 17, 1789, page 185.		
<i>Letter</i>	111	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	June 5, 1789	<i>Page</i> 188
	112	To the same	June 20, 1789	ib.
	113	To Mrs. Throckmorton	July 18, 1789	189
	114	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	July 23, 1789	190
	115	To the same	Aug. 8, 1789	191
	116	To the same	Sept. 24, 1789	ib.

CONTENTS.

ix

<i>Letter</i> 117	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	Sept. 11, 1788	<i>Page</i> 192
118	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	Dec. 18, 1789	193
119	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	Jan. 3, 1790	ib.
120	To Lady Hesketh	Jan. 23, 1790	194
121	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	Feb. 2, 1790	195
122	To Lady Hesketh	Feb. 9, 1790	196
Verses to Mrs. Throckmorton, on her beautiful Transcript of Horace's Ode, Ad Librum suum, page 197.			
<i>Letter</i> 123	To Lady Hesketh	Feb. 26, 1790	<i>Page</i> 197
124	To Mrs. Bodham	Feb. 27, 1790	198
125	To John Johnson, Esq.	Feb. 28, 1790	200
126	To Lady Hesketh	March 8, 1790	202
127	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	March 11, 1790	ib.
128	To Mrs. Throckmorton	March 21, 1790	203
129	To Lady Hesketh	March 22, 1790	204
130	To John Johnson, Esq.	March 23, 1790	205
131	To the same	April 17, 1790	206
132	To Lady Hesketh,	April 19, 1890	208
133	To the same	April 30, 1790	ib.
134	To Mrs. Throckmorton	May 10, 1790	209
135	To Lady Hesketh	May 28, 1790	210
136	To the same	June 3, 1790	ib.
137	To John Johnson, Esq.	June 7, 1790	211
138	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	June 8, 1790	212
139	To Mrs. Bodham	June 29, 1790	213
140	To Lady Hesketh	July 7, 1790	214
141	To John Johnson, Esq.	July 8, 1790	215
142	To the same	July 31, 1790	216
143	To Mrs. Bodham	Sept. 9, 1790	ib.
144	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	Sept. 13, 1790	217
145	To Mrs. Bodham	Nov. 21, 1790	218
146	To John Johnson, Esq.	Nov. 26, 1790	219
147	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	Nov. 30, 1790	220
148	To John Johnson, Esq.	Dec. 18, 1790	ib.
149	To the same	Jan. 21, 1791	221
150	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	Feb. 5, 1791	222
151	To Lady Hesketh	Feb. 13, 1791	ib.
152	To John Johnson, Esq.	Feb. 27, 1791	223
153	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	March 6, 1791	224
154	To the same	March 10, 1791	ib.
155	To John Johnson, Esq.	March 19, 1791	ib.
156	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	March 24, 1791	225
157	To Mrs. Throckmorton	April 1, 1791	226
158	To John Johnson, Esq.	April 6, 1791	ib.
159	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	April 29, 1791	227
160	To John Johnson, Esq.	May 23, 1791	ib.

## CONTENTS.

- The Judgment of the Poets, an occasional Poem, page 228.  
*Letter 161 To Samuel Rose, Esq. June 15, 1791 Page 229*  
 The first Publication of Cowper's Homer—the Pleasure he derived from  
 that Work—Extract of a Letter on the Subject to his Kinsman, of  
 Norfolk, page 230, to the end of the Volume.



## DIRECTIONS TO THE BINDER.

- The Portrait of Cowper as a Frontispiece to Vol. I.  
 The Portrait of Mrs. Cowper to face Page 3, Vol. I.



AN  
INTRODUCTORY LETTER

TO THE

Right Honourable Earl COWPER.

YOUR family, my Lord, our country itself, and the whole literary world, sustained such a loss in the death of that amiable man and enchanting author who forms the subject of these volumes, as inspired the friends of genius and virtue with universal concern. It soon became a general wish, that some authentic and copious memorial of a character so highly interesting should be produced with all becoming dispatch; not only to render due honour to the dead, but to alleviate the regret of a nation taking a just and liberal pride in the reputation of a poet, who had obtained and deserved her applause, her esteem, her affection. If this laudable wish was very sensibly felt by the public at large, it glowed with peculiar warmth and eagerness in the bosom of the few who had been so fortunate as to enjoy an intimacy with Cowper in some unclouded periods of his life, and who knew, from such an intimacy, that a lively sweetness and sanctity of spirit were as truly the characteristics of his social enjoyments, as they are allowed to constitute a principal charm in his poetical productions.—It has justly been regarded as a signal blessing, to have possessed the perfect esteem and confidence of such a man: and not long after his decease, one of his particular friends presumed to suggest to an accomplished lady, nearly related both to him and to your Lordship, that she herself might be the biographer the most worthy of the poet. The long intimacy and correspondence which she enjoyed with him, from their lively hours of in-

fantile friendship to the dark evening of his wonderfully chequered life; her cultivated and affectionate mind, which led her to take peculiar delight and interest in the merit and the reputation of his writings; and, lastly, that generous attachment to her afflicted relation which induced her to watch over his disordered health, in a period of its most calamitous depression;—these circumstances, united, seemed to render it desirable that she should assume the office of Cowper's biographer; having such advantages for the perfect execution of that very delicate office as, perhaps, no other memorialist could possess in an equal degree. For the interest of literature, and for the honour of many poets, whose memories have suffered from some biographers of a very different description, we may wish that the extensive series of poetical biography had been frequently enriched by the memoirs of such remembrancers as feel only the influence of tenderness and truth. Some poets, indeed, of recent times, have been happy in this most desirable advantage. The Scottish favourite of nature, the tender and impetuous Burns, has found, in Dr. Currie, an ingenuous, eloquent, affectionate biographer; and in a lady also (whose memoir of her friend, the bard, is very properly annexed to his life) a zealous and graceful advocate, singularly happy in vindicating his character from invidious detraction. We may observe, to the honour of Scotland, that her national enthusiasm has, for some years, been very laudably exerted in cherishing the memory of her departed poets.—But to return to the lady who gave rise to this remark. The natural diffidence of her sex, uniting with extreme delicacy of health, induced her, eager as she is to promote the celebrity of her deceased relation, to shrink from the idea of submitting herself, as an author, to the formidable eye of the public. Her knowledge of the very cordial regard with which Cowper has honoured me, as one of his most confidential friends, led her to request that she might assign to me that arduous office, which she candidly confessed she had not the resolution to assume. She confided to my care such materials for the work in question, as her affinity to the deceased had



thrown into her hands. In receiving a collection of many private letters, and of several posthumous little poems, in the well-known characters of that beloved correspondent, at the sight of whose hand I have often exulted, I felt the blended emotions of melancholy regret, and of awful pleasure. Yes, I was pleased that these affecting papers were entrusted to my care, because some incidents induce me to believe that, if their revered author had been solicited to appoint a biographer for himself, he would have assigned to me this honourable task. Yet, honourable as I considered it, I was perfectly aware of the difficulties and the dangers attending it. One danger, indeed, appeared to me of such a nature as to require perpetual caution as I advanced: I mean the danger of being led, in writing as the biographer of my friend, to speak infinitely too much of myself. To avoid the offensive failing of egotism, I had resolved, at first, to make no inconsiderable sacrifice, and to suppress, in his letters, every particle of praise bestowed upon myself. I soon found it impossible to do so without injuring the tender and generous spirit of my friend. I have, therefore, suffered many expressions of his affectionate partiality towards me to appear, at the hazard of being censured for inordinate vanity. To obviate such a censure, I will only say, that I have endeavoured to execute what I regard as a mournful duty, as if I were under the immediate and visible direction of the most pure, the most truly modest, and the most gracefully virtuous mind, that I had ever the happiness of knowing in the form of a manly friend. It is certainly my wish that these volumes may obtain the entire approbation of the world; but it is infinitely more my desire and ambition to render them exactly such as I think most likely to gratify the conscious spirit of Cowper himself in a superior existence. The person who recommended it to his female relation to continue her exemplary regard to the poet, by appearing as his biographer, advised her to relate the particulars of his life in the form of letters addressed to your Lordship. He cited, on the occasion, a striking passage from the memoirs of Gibbon, in which that great historian pays a just and a

splendid compliment to one of the early English poets, who, in the tenderness and purity of his heart, and in the vivid powers of description, may be thought to resemble Cowper. The passage I allude to is this: "The nobility of the Spencers has been illustrated and enriched by the trophies of Marlborough; but I exhort them to consider the Fairy Queen as the most precious jewel of their coronet." If this lively metaphor is just in every point of view, we may regard *The Task* as a jewel of pre-eminent lustre in the coronet belonging to the noble family of Cowper. Under the influence of this idea, allow me, my Lord, to address to you such memoirs of your admirable relation, as my own intimacy with him, and the kindness of those who knew and loved him most truly, have enabled me to compose. I will tell you, with perfect sincerity, all my motives for addressing them to your Lordship. First, I flatter myself it may be a pleasing, and, permit me to say, not an unuseful occupation to an ingenuous young nobleman, to trace the steps by which a retired man, of the most diffident modesty, whose private virtues did honour to his name, arose to peculiar celebrity. My second motive is, I own, of a more selfish nature; for I am persuaded, that, in addressing my work to you, I give the public a satisfactory pledge for the authenticity of my materials. I will not pretend to say that I hold it in the power of any title, or affinity, to reflect an additional lustre on the memory of the departed poet: for I think so highly of poetical distinction, when that distinction is pre-eminently obtained by genius, piety, and benevolence, that all common honours appear to be eclipsed by a splendour more forcible and extensive. Great poets, my Lord, and that I may speak of them as they deserve, let me say, in the words of Horace,

Primum me illorum, dederim quibus esse Poetas,  
Excerptam numero—

Great poets have generally united in their destiny those extremes of good and evil, which Homer, their immortal president, assigns to the bard he describes, and which he exemplified himself in his own person.—Their lives have been



frequently chequered by the darkest shades of calamity; but their personal infelicities are nobly compensated by the prevalence and the extent of their renown. To set this in the most striking point of view, allow me to compare poetical celebrity with the fame acquired by the exertion of different mental powers in the highest department of civil life. The Lord Chancellors of England may be justly regarded among the personages of the modern world, peculiarly exalted by intellectual endowments: with two of these illustrious characters, the poet, whose life I have endeavoured to delineate, was in some measure connected; being related to one, the immediate ancestor of your Lordship, and being intimate, in early life, with a Chancellor of the present reign, whose elevation to that dignity he has recorded in rhyme. Much respect is due to the legal names of Cowper, and of Thurlow. Knowledge, eloquence, and political importance, conspired to aggrandize the men who added those names to the list of English nobility: yet, after the lapse of a few centuries, they will shine only like very distant constellations, merely visible in the vast expanse of history! But, at that time, the poet of whom I speak, will continue to sparkle in the eyes of all men, like the radiant star of the evening, perpetually hailed by the voice of gratitude, affection, and delight. There is a principle of unperishable vitality (if I may use such an expression) in the compositions of Cowper, which must ensure to them in future ages, what we have seen them so happily acquire and maintain in the present—universal admiration and love! His poetry is to the heart and the fancy, what the moral essays of Bacon are to the understanding, a never-cloying feast!

“As if increase of appetite had grown

“By what it fed on.”

Like them it comes “home to the business and bosom of every man;” by possessing the rare and double talent to familiarize and endear the most awful subjects, and to dignify the most familiar, the poet naturally becomes a favourite with readers of every description. His works must interest

every nation under heaven, where his sentiments are understood, and where the feelings of humanity prevail. Yet their author is eminently an Englishman, in the noblest sense of that honourable appellation. He loved the constitution; he revered the religion of his country; he was tenderly, and generously alive to her real interest and honour; and perhaps of her many admirable poets, not one has touched her foibles, and celebrated her perfections, with a spirit so truly filial.—But I perceive that I am in danger of going far beyond my design in this introductory letter, for it was my intention not to enter into the merits of his character here, but to inform you in what manner I wish to make that character display itself to my readers, as far as possible, in his own most interesting language.—Perhaps no man ever possessed the powers of description in a higher degree, both in verse and prose. By weaving into the texture of these Memoirs, an extensive selection of his private letters, and several of his posthumous poems, I trust that a faithful representation of him has been formed, where the most striking features will appear the work of his own inimitable hand. The result of the whole production will, I am confident, establish one most satisfactory truth, interesting to society in general, and to your Lordship in particular: the truth I mean is expressed in the final verse of an epitaph, which the hand of friendship inscribed to your excellent relation:

“ His virtues form'd the magic of his song.”

May the affectionate zeal with which I have endeavoured to render all the justice in my power to his variety of merit, atone for whatever deficiencies may be found in this imperfect attempt, and lead both your Lordship and our Country to honour with some degree of approbation,

Your very faithful servant,

WILLIAM HAYLEY.

THE  
LIFE OF COWPER.

PART THE FIRST.

*INGENIUM PROBITAS, ARTEMQUE MODESTIA VINCIT.*

THE family of COWPER appears to have held, for several centuries, a respectable rank among the merchants and gentry of England. We learn from the life of the first Earl Cowper, in the *Biographia Britannica*, that his ancestors were inhabitants of Sussex, in the reign of Edward the Fourth. The name is found repeatedly among the Sheriffs of London; and John Cowper, who resided as a country gentleman in Kent, was created a Baronet by King Charles the First, in 1641. But the family rose to higher distinction in the beginning of the last century, by the remarkable circumstance of producing two brothers, who both obtained a seat in the house of peers by eminence in the profession of the law. William, the eldest, became Lord High Chancellor in 1707. Spencer Cowper, the youngest, was appointed Chief Justice of Chester in 1717, and afterwards a judge in the court of Common Pleas, being permitted, by the particular favour of the King, to hold those two offices to the end of his life. He died in Lincoln's Inn, on the 10th of December, 1728, and has the higher claim to our notice as the immediate ancestor of the Poet. By Theodora, his second wife, the widow of George Stepney, Esq. Judge Cowper left several children; among them a daughter Judith, who, at the age of eighteen, discovered a striking talent for poetry, in the praise of her cotemporary poets Pope and Hughes. This lady, the wife of Colonel Madan, transmitted her own poetical and devout spirit to her daughter Frances Maria, who was married to her cousin, Major Cowper, and whose amiable character will unfold itself in the course of this work, as the friend and correspondent of her more eminent relation, the second grandchild of the judge, destined to honour the name of Cowper, by displaying, with peculiar purity and fervour, the double enthusiasm of poetry and devotion. The father of the great author to whom I allude, was John Cowper, the judge's second son, who took his degrees in divinity, was chaplain to King George the Second, and resided at

his Rectory of Great Berkhamstead, in Hertfordshire, the scene of the Poet's infancy, which he has thus commemorated in a singularly beautiful and pathetic composition on the portrait of his mother.

Where once we dwelt our name is heard no more,  
 Children not thinè have trod my nursery floor,  
 And where the gard'ner Robin, day by day,  
 Drew me to school along the public way;  
 Delighted with my bauble coach, and wrapt  
 In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet capt,  
 'Tis now become a history little known,  
 That once we call'd the past'ral house our own.  
 Short-liv'd possession! but the record fair  
 That memory keeps of all thy kindness there,  
 Still outlives many a storm that has effac'd  
 A thousand other themes less deeply trac'd.  
 Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,  
 That thou might'st know me safe and warmly laid;  
 Thy morning bounties, ere I left my home,  
 The biscuit, or confectionary plumb;  
 The fragrant waters on my cheeks bestow'd  
 By thy own hand, till fresh they shone and glow'd.  
 All this, and more endearing still than all,  
 Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall;  
 Ne'er roughen'd by those cataracts and breaks,  
 That humour interpos'd too often makes.  
 All this, still legible in memory's page,  
 And still to be so to my latest age,  
 Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay  
 Such honours to thee as my numbers may.

The parent whose merits are so feelingly recorded by the filial tenderness of the Poet, was Ann, daughter of Roger Donne, Esq. of Ludham Hall, in Norfolk. This lady, whose family is said to have been originally from Wales, was married, in the bloom of youth, to Dr. Cowper; after giving birth to several children, who died in their infancy, and leaving two sons, William, the immediate subject of this memorial, born at Berkhamstead on the 26th of November, N. S. 1731, and John (whose accomplishments and memorable death will be described in the course of this compilation), she died in childbed at the early age of thirty-four, in 1737. It may be wished that the painter employed to preserve a resemblance of such a woman had possessed those powers of graceful and per-







Mrs. Cowper.

Mother of the Poet .

fect delineation which, in a different art, belonged to the pen of her son; but her portrait, executed by Heins in oil-colours, on a small scale, is a production infinitely inferior to the very beautiful poem to which it gave rise. Yet such as it is, I apprehend it will gratify my reader to find it in this volume correctly engraved; for what lover of poetry can fail to take an affectionate interest in the mother of Cowper? Those who delight in contemplating the best affections of our nature, will ever admire the tender sensibility with which the Poet has acknowledged his obligations to this amiable mother, in a poem composed more than fifty years after her decease. Readers of this description may find a pleasure in observing how the praise so liberally bestowed on this tender parent, at so late a period, is confirmed (if praise so unquestionable may be said to receive confirmation) by another poetical record of her merit, which the hand of affinity and affection bestowed upon her tomb. A record written at a time when the Poet, who was destined to prove, in his advanced life, her more powerful eulogist, had hardly begun to show the dawn of that genius which, after years of silent affliction, arose like a star emerging from tempestuous darkness.

The monument of Mrs. Cowper, erected by her husband in the chancel of St. Peter's church, at Berkhamstead, contains the following verses, composed by a young lady, her niece, the late Lady Walsingham:

Here lies, in early years bereft of life,  
 The best of mothers, and the kindest wife;  
 Who neither knew, nor practis'd any art,  
 Secure in all she wish'd, her husband's heart.  
 Her love to him still prevalent in death,  
 Pray'd Heaven to bless him with her latest breath.

Still was she studious never to offend,  
 And glad of an occasion to commend:  
 With ease would pardon injuries receiv'd,  
 Nor e'er was cheerful when another griev'd.  
 Despising state, with her own lot content,  
 Enjoy'd the comforts of a life well-spent.  
 Resign'd when Heaven demanded back her breath,  
 Her mind heroic 'midst the pangs of death.

Whoe'er thou art that dost this 'Tomb draw near,  
 O stay awhile, and shed a friendly tear,  
 These lines, tho' weak, are as herself sincere. }

The truth and tenderness of this Epitaph will more than compensate with every candid reader the imperfection ascribed to it by



its young and modest Author. To have lost a parent of a character so virtuous and endearing, at an early period of his childhood, was the prime misfortune of Cowper, and what contributed, perhaps in the highest degree, to the dark colouring of his subsequent life. The influence of a good mother on the first years of her children, whether nature has given them peculiar strength, or peculiar delicacy of frame, is equally inestimable: It is the prerogative and the felicity of such a mother to temper the arrogance of the strong, and to dissipate the timidity of the tender. The infancy of Cowper was delicate in no common degree, and his constitution discovered, at a very early season, that morbid tendency to diffidence, to melancholy, and despair, which darkened as he advanced in years into periodical fits of the most deplorable depression.

It may afford an ample field for useful reflection to observe, in speaking of a child, that he was destined to excite, in his progress through life, the highest degrees of admiration and of pity—of admiration for mental excellence, and of pity for mental disorder.

We understand human nature too imperfectly to ascertain in what measure the original structure of his frame, and the casual incidents of his life, contributed to the happy perfection of his genius, or to the calamitous eclipses of his effulgent mind. Yet such were the talents, the virtues, and the misfortunes of this wonderful person, that it is hardly possible for Biography, extensive as her province is, to speak of a more interesting individual, or to select a subject on which it may be more difficult to satisfy a variety of readers. In feeling all the weight of this difficulty, I may still be confident that I shall not utterly disappoint his sincerest admirers, if the success of my endeavours to make him more known, and more beloved, is proportioned, in any degree, to the zeal with which I cultivated his friendship, and to the gratification that I feel in recalling to my own recollection the delightful extent and diversity of his literary powers, with the equally delightful sweetness of his social character.

But the powerful influence of such recollection has drawn me imperceptibly from the proper course of my narrative.—I return to the childhood of Cowper. In first quitting the house of his parents, he was sent to a reputable school at Market-Street, in Hertfordshire, under the care of Dr. Pitman, and it is probable that he was removed from it in consequence of an ocular complaint. From a circumstance which he relates of himself at that period, in a letter written to me in 1792, he seems to have been in danger of resembling Milton in the misfortune of blindness, as he resembled him, more happily, in the fervency of a devout and poetical spirit.

“I have been all my life,” says Cowper, “subject to inflamma-

tions of the eye, and in my boyish days had specks on both that threatened to cover them. My father, alarmed for the consequences, sent me to a female oculist of great renown at that time, in whose house I abode two years, but to no good purpose. From her I went to Westminster school, where, at the age of fourteen, the small-pox seized me, and proved the better oculist of the two, for it delivered me from them all. Not, however, from great liability to inflammation, to which I am in a degree still subject, though much less than formerly, since I have been constant in the use of a hot foot-bath every night, the last thing before going to rest."

It appears a strange process in education to send a tender child from a long residence in the house of a female oculist immediately into all the hardships that a little delicate boy must have to encounter at a public school. But the mother of Cowper was dead, and fathers, though good men, are, in general, utterly unfit to manage their young and tender orphans. The little Cowper was sent to his first school in the year of his mother's death, and how ill-suited the scene was to his peculiar character, must be evident to all who have heard him describe his sensations in that season of life, which is often, very erroneously, extolled as the happiest period of human existence. He has been frequently heard to lament the persecution that he sustained in his childish years, from the cruelty of his school-fellows, in the two scenes of his education. His own forcible expression represented him at Westminster as not daring to raise his eye above the shoe-buckle of the elder boys, who were too apt to tyrannize over his gentle spirit. The acuteness of his feelings in his childhood rendered those important years (which might have produced, under tender cultivation, a series of lively enjoyments) miserable years of increasing timidity and depression, which, in the most cheerful hours of his advanced life, he could hardly describe to an intimate friend, without shuddering at the recollection of his early wretchedness. Yet to this, perhaps, the world is indebted for the pathetic and moral eloquence of those forcible admonitions to parents which give interest and beauty to his admirable Poem on Public Schools. Poets may be said to realize, in some measure, the poetical idea of the Nightingale singing with a thorn at her breast, as their most exquisite songs have often originated in the acuteness of their personal sufferings. Of this obvious truth, the Poem I have just mentioned is a very memorable example; and if any readers have thought the Poet too severe in his strictures on that system of education to which we owe some of the most accomplished characters that ever gave celebrity to a civilized nation, such readers will be candidly reconciled to that moral severity of reproof, in recollecting that it flowed from se-

vere personal experience, united to the purest spirit of philanthropy and patriotism.

Cowper's exhortation to fathers, to educate their own sons, is a model of persuasive eloquence, and not inferior to similar exhortations in the eloquent Rousseau, or in the accomplished translator of Tansillo's poem, the Nurse, by which these enchanting writers have induced, and will continue to induce, so many mothers in polished life to suckle their own children. Yet similar as these exhortations may be esteemed, in their benevolent design, and in their graceful expression, there are two powerful reasons, which must, in all probability, prevent their being attended with similar success. In the first place, woman has, in general, much stronger propensity than man to the perfect discharge of parental duties; and, secondly, the avocations of men are so imperious, in their different lines of life, that few fathers could command sufficient leisure (if nature furnished them with talents and inclination) to fulfil the arduous office of preceptor to their own children; yet arduous and irksome as the office is generally thought, there is perhaps no species of mental labour so perfectly sweet in its success; and the Poet justly exclaims:

O 'tis a sight to be with joy perus'd,  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 A sight surpass'd by none that we can show!  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 A Father blest with an ingenuous Son;  
 Father, and Friend, and Tutor, all in one.

Had the constitutional shyness and timidity of Cowper been gradually dispelled by the rare advantage that he describes in these verses, his early years would certainly have been happier; but men who are partial to public schools will probably doubt if any system of private tuition could have proved more favourable to the future display of his genius, than such an education as he received at Westminster, where, however the peculiar delicacy of his nature might expose him to an extraordinary portion of juvenile discomfort, he undoubtedly acquired the accomplishment and the reputation of scholarship, with the advantage of being known and esteemed by some aspiring youths of his own age, who were destined to become conspicuous and powerful in the splendid scenes of the world.

With these acquisitions he left Westminster, at the age of eighteen, in 1749; and, as if destiny had determined that all his early situations in life should be peculiarly irksome to his delicate feelings, and tend rather to promote than to counteract a constitu-

tional tendency to a morbid sensibility in his frame, he was removed from a public school to the office of an attorney. He resided three years in the house of a Mr. Chapman, to whom he was engaged by articles for that time. Here he was placed for the study of a profession which nature seemed resolved that he never should practise.

The law is a kind of soldiership, and, like the profession of arms, it may be said to require for the constitution of its heroes

“A frame of adamant, a soul of fire.”

The soul of Cowper had indeed its fire, but fire so refined and ethereal, that it could not be expected to shine in the gross atmosphere of worldly contention. Perhaps there never existed a mortal who, possessing, with a good person, intellectual powers naturally strong, and highly cultivated, was so utterly unfit to encounter the bustle and perplexities of public life. But the extreme modesty and shyness of his nature, which disqualified him for scenes of business and ambition, endeared him inexpressibly to those who had opportunities to enjoy his society, and faculties to appreciate the uncommon excellence of his interesting character.

Reserved as he was, to an extraordinary and painful degree, his heart and mind were yet admirably fashioned by nature for all the refined intercourse and confidential delights, both of friendship and of love: but though apparently formed to possess, and to communicate an extraordinary portion of mortal felicity, the incidents of his life were such, that, conspiring with the peculiarities of his nature, they rendered him, at different times, the most unhappy of mankind. The variety and depth of his sufferings, in early life, from extreme tenderness of heart, are very forcibly displayed in the following verses, which formed part of a letter to one of his female relations at the time they were composed. The letter has perished; and the verses owe their preservation to the affectionate memory of the lady to whom they were addressed.

Doom'd, as I am, in solitude to waste  
 The present moments, and regret the past;  
 Depriv'd of every joy I valued most,  
 My Friend torn from me, and my Mistress lost;  
 Call not this gloom, I wear, this anxious mien,  
 The dull effect of humour, or of spleen!  
 Still, still I mourn, with each returning day,  
 Him\* snatch'd by Fate, in early youth, away.

\* Sir William Russel, the favourite friend of the young Poet.



And her—through tedious years of doubt and pain;  
 Fix'd in her choice, and faithful—but in vain!  
 O prone to pity, generous, and sincere,  
 Whose eye ne'er yet refused the wretch a tear;  
 Whose heart the real claim of friendship knows,  
 Nor thinks a lover's are but fancied woes;  
 See me—ere yet my destin'd course half done,  
 Cast forth a wand'rer on a wild unknown!  
 See me neglected on the world's rude coast,  
 Each dear companion of my voyage lost!  
 Nor ask why clouds of sorrow shade my brow!  
 And ready tears wait only leave to flow!  
 Why all that soothes a heart, from anguish free,  
 All that delights the happy—palls with me!

When he quitted the house of the solicitor, where he was placed to acquire the rudiments of litigation, he settled himself in chambers of the Inner-Temple, as a regular student of law; but although he resided there to the age of thirty-three, he rambled (according to his own colloquial account of his early years) from the thorny road of his austere patroness, Jurisprudence, into the primrose paths of Literature and Poetry. Even here his native diffidence confined him to social and subordinate exertions. He wrote and printed both prose and verse, as the concealed assistant of less diffident authors. During his residence in the Temple, he cultivated the friendship of some eminent literary characters, who had been his school-fellows at Westminster, particularly Colman, Bonnel Thornton, and Lloyd. His regard to the two first induced him to contribute to their periodical publication, entitled the *Connoisseur*, three excellent papers, which the reader will find in the Appendix to these volumes, and from which he will perceive, that Cowper had such talents for this pleasant and useful species of composition, as might have rendered him a worthy associate, in such labours, to Addison himself, whose graceful powers have never been surpassed in that province of literature, which may still be considered as peculiarly his own.

The intimacy of Cowper and Lloyd may have given rise perhaps to some early productions of our Poet, which it may now be hardly possible to ascertain; the probability of this conjecture arises from the necessities of Lloyd, and the affectionate liberality of his friend. As the former was tempted, by his narrow finances, to engage in periodical works, it is highly probable that the pen of Cowper, ever ready to second the charitable wishes of his heart, might be devoted to the service of an indigent Author, whom he appears to

have loved with a very cordial affection. I find that affection agreeably displayed in a sportive poetical epistle, which may claim a place in this volume, not only as an early specimen of Cowper's poetry, but as exhibiting a sketch of his own mind at the age of twenty-three.

## AN EPISTLE TO ROBERT LLOYD, ESQ. 1754.

'Tis not that I design to rob  
Thee of thy birth-right, gentle Bob,  
For thou art born sole heir, and single,  
Of dear Mat Prior's easy jingle;  
Nor that I mean, while thus I knit  
My thread-bare sentiments together,  
To show my genius, or my wit,  
When God and you know I have neither;  
Or such, as might be better shown  
By letting Poetry alone.

'Tis not with either of these views  
That I presume to address the Muse;  
But to divert a fierce banditti,  
(Sworn foes to every thing that's witty!)  
That, with a black, infernal train,  
Make cruel inroads in my brain,  
And daily threaten to drive thence  
My little garrison of sense:  
The fierce banditti which I mean,  
Are gloomy thoughts, led on by spleen.  
Then there's another reason yet,  
Which is, that I may fairly quit  
The debt, which justly became due  
The moment when I heard from you:  
And you might grumble, crony mine,  
If paid in any other coin;  
Since twenty sheets of lead, God knows  
(I would say twenty sheets of prose)  
Can ne'er be deem'd worth half so much  
As one of gold, and yours was such.  
Thus, the preliminaries settled,  
I fairly find myself *pitch-kettled*;<sup>\*</sup>  
And cannot see, tho' few see better,  
How I shall hammer out a letter.

\* *Pitch-kettled*, a favourite phrase at the time when this Epistle was written, expressive of being puzzled; or what, in the Spectator's time, would have been called *barboozled*.

First, for a thought—since all agree—  
 A thought—I have it—let me see—  
 'Tis gone again—Plague on't! I thought  
 I had it—but I have it not.  
 Dame Gurton thus, and Hodge her son,  
 That useful thing, her needle, gone;  
 Rake well the cinders;—sweep the floor,  
 And sift the dust behind the door;  
 While eager Hodge beholds the prize  
 In old Grimalkin's glaring eyes;  
 And Gammer finds it on her knees  
 In every shining straw she sees.  
 This simile were apt enough;  
 But I've another critic-proof!  
 The Virtuoso thus, at noon  
 Broiling beneath a July sun,  
 The gilded Butterfly pursues,  
 O'er hedge and ditch, through gaps and mews;  
 And after many a vain essay  
 To captivate the tempting prey,  
 Gives him at length the lucky pat,  
 And has him safe, beneath his hat:  
 Then lifts it gently from the ground;  
 But ah! 'tis lost as soon as found;  
 Culprit his liberty regains,  
 Flits out of sight, and mocks his pains.  
 The sense was dark; 'twas therefore fit  
 With simile t' illustrate it;  
 But as too much obscures the sight,  
 As often as too little light,  
 We have our similies cut short,  
 For matters of more grave import.  
 That Matthew's numbers run with ease,  
 Each man of common sense agrees;  
 All men of common sense allow,  
 That Robert's lines are easy too:  
 Where then the preference shall we place?  
 Or how do justice in this case?  
 Matthew (says Fame), with endless pains,  
 Smooth'd, and refin'd, the meanest strains;  
 Nor suffer'd one ill chosen rhyme  
 T' escape him at the idlest time;  
 And thus o'er all a lustre cast,  
 That, while the language lives, shall last



An't please your Ladyship (quoth I),  
 For 'tis my business to reply;  
 Sure so much labour, so much toil,  
 Bespeak at least a stubborn soil:  
 'Theirs be the laurel-wreath decreed,  
 Who both write well, and write full speed!  
 Who throw their Helicon about  
 As freely as a conduit spout!  
 Friend Robert, thus like *chien scavant*,  
 Let's fall a poem *en fassant*;  
 Nor needs his genuine ore refine,  
 'Tis ready polish'd from the mine.

It may be proper to observe, that this lively praise on the playful talent of Lloyd was written six years before that amiable but unfortunate author published the best of his serious poems, "The Actor," a composition of considerable merit, which proved a prelude to the more powerful and popular Rosciad of Churchill; who, after surpassing Lloyd as a rival, assisted him very liberally as a friend. While Cowper resided in the Temple, he seems to have been personally acquainted with the most eminent writers of the time; and the interest which he probably took in their recent works tended to increase his powerful though diffident passion for poetry, and to train him imperceptibly to that masterly command of language, which time and chance led him to display, almost as a new talent, at the age of fifty. One of his first associates has informed me, that before he quitted London he frequently amused himself in translation from ancient and modern poets, and devoted his composition to the service of any friend who requested it. In a copy of Duncombe's Horace, printed in 1759, I find two of the Satires translated by Cowper. The Duncombes, father and son, were amiable scholars, of a Hertfordshire family; and the elder Duncombe, in his printed letters, mentions Dr. Cowper (the father of the Poet) as one of his friends, who possessed a talent for poetry, exhibiting, at the same time, a respectable specimen of his verse. The Duncombes, in the preface to their Horace, impute the size of their work to the poetical contributions of their friends. At what time the two Satires I have mentioned were translated by William Cowper, I have not been able to ascertain; but they are worthy his pen, and will, therefore, appear in the Appendix to these volumes.

Speaking of his own early life, in a letter to Mr. Park, dated March, 1792, Cowper says, with that extreme modesty which was one of his most remarkable characteristics, "From the age of

twenty to thirty-three, I was occupied, or ought to have been, in the study of the law; from thirty-three to sixty I have spent my time in the country, where my reading has been only an apology for idleness; and where, when I had not either a Magazine or a Review, I was sometimes a carpenter, at others a bird-cage maker, or a gardener, or a drawer of landscapes. At fifty years of age I commenced an author: it is a whim that has served me longest and best, and will probably be my last."

Lightly as this most modest of Poets has spoken of his own exertions, and late as he appeared to himself in producing his chief poetical works, he had received from nature a contemplative spirit, perpetually acquiring a store of mental treasure, which he at last unveiled, to delight and astonish the world with its unexpected magnificence. Even his juvenile verses discover a mind deeply impressed with sentiments of piety; and, in proof of this assertion, I select a few stanzas from an Ode written, when he was very young, on reading Sir Charles Grandison.

To rescue from the tyrant's sword  
The oppress'd;—unseen, and unimplor'd,  
    To cheer the face of woe;  
From lawless insult to defend  
An orphan's right—a fallen friend,  
    And a forgiven foe;

These, these distinguish, from the crowd,  
And these alone, the great and good,  
    The guardians of mankind;  
Whose bosoms with these virtues heave,  
O, with what matchless speed they leave  
    The multitude behind!

Then ask ye from what cause on earth  
Virtues like these derive their birth?  
    Derived from Heaven alone,  
Full on that favour'd breast they shine,  
Where Faith and Resignation join  
    To call the blessing down.

Such is that heart:—But while the Muse  
Thy theme, O Richardson, pursues,  
    Her feebler spirits faint:  
She cannot reach, and would not wrong  
That subject for an Angel's song,  
    The Hero and the Saint.

His early turn to moralize, on the slightest occasion, will appear from the following Verses, which he wrote at the age of eighteen; and in which those who love to trace the rise and progress of genius will, I think, be pleased to remark the very promising seeds of those peculiar powers which unfolded themselves in the richest maturity, at a distant period, and rendered that beautiful and sublime poem, *The Task*, the most instructive and interesting of modern compositions.

*Verses written at Bath, in 1748, on finding the Heel of a Shoe.*

Fortune! I thank thee: gentle Goddess! thanks!  
 Not that my Muse, though bashful, shall deny,  
 She would have thank'd thee rather, hadst thou cast  
 A treasure in her way; for neither meed  
 Of early breakfast to dispel the fumes,  
 And bowel-racking pains of emptiness,  
 Nor noon-tide feast, nor evening's cool repast,  
 Hopes she from this, presumptuous, tho' perhaps  
 The Cobler, leather-carving artist! might.  
 Nathless she thanks thee, and accepts thy boon  
 Whatever, not as erst the fabled Cock,  
 Vain-glorious fool! unknowing what he found,  
 Spurn'd the rich gem thou gav'st him. Wherefore ah!  
 Why not on me that favour, (worthier sure!)  
 Conferr'dst thou, Goddess! Thou art blind, thou say'st:  
 Enough!—Thy blindness shall excuse the deed.

Nor does my Muse no benefit exhale  
 From this thy scant indulgence!—even here  
 Hints, worthy sage philosophy, are found;  
 Illustrious hints to moralize my song!  
 This pond'rous Heel of perforated hide  
 Compact, with pegs indented, many a row,  
 Haply (for such its massy form bespeaks)  
 The weighty tread of some rude peasant clown  
 Upbore: on this supported, oft he stretch'd,  
 With uncouth strides, along the furrow'd globe,  
 Flatt'ning the stubborn clod, till cruel time,  
 (What will not cruel time?) on a wry step,  
 Sever'd the strict cohesion: when, alas!  
 He, who could erst, with even, equal pace,  
 Pursue his destin'd way, with symmetry,  
 And some proportion form'd, now, on one side,  
 Curtail'd and maim'd, the sport of vagrant boys,

Cursing his frail supporter, treacherous prop!  
 With toilsome steps, and difficult, moves on.  
 Thus fares it oft with other, than the feet  
 Of humble villager—the statesman thus,  
 Up the steep road, where proud ambition leads,  
 Aspiring first, uninterrupted winds  
 His prosp'rous way; nor fears miscarriage foul,  
 While policy prevails, and friends prove true:  
 But that support soon failing, by him left,  
 On whom he most depended, basely left,  
 Betray'd, deserted, from his airy height  
 Head-long he falls; and through the rest of life  
 Drags the dull load of disappointment on.

Of a youth, who, in a scene like Bath, could produce such a meditation, it might fairly be expected that he would,

“In riper life, exempt from public haunt,  
 Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
 Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.”

These few words of Shakspeare have often appeared to me as an absolute portrait of Cowper, at that happiest period of his days, when he exercised and enjoyed his rare poetical powers in privacy, at the pleasant village of Weston. But before we contemplate the poetical Recluse in that scene, it is the duty of his biographer to relate some painful incidents, that led him, by extraordinary steps, to his favourite retreat.

Though extreme diffidence, and a tendency to despond, seemed early to preclude Cowper from the expectation of climbing to the splendid summit of the profession he had chosen; yet, by the interest of his family, he had prospects of emolument, in a line of public life, that appeared better suited to the modesty of his nature, and to his moderate ambition.

In his thirty-first year he was nominated to the offices of reading Clerk, and Clerk of the private Committees in the House of Lords. A situation the more desirable, as such an establishment might enable him to marry early in life; a measure to which he was doubly disposed by judgment and inclination. But the peculiarities of his wonderful mind rendered him unable to support the ordinary duties of his new office; for the idea of reading in public proved a source of torture to his tender and apprehensive spirit. An expedient was devised to promote his interest, without wounding his feelings. Resigning his situation of reading Clerk, he was appointed

Clerk of the Journals in the same House of Parliament, with a hope that his personal appearance in that assembly might not be required; but a parliamentary dispute made it necessary for him to appear at the bar of the House of Lords to entitle himself publicly to the office.

Speaking of this important incident in a sketch, which he once formed himself, of passages in his early life, he expresses what he endured at the time, in these remarkable words: "They whose spirits are formed like mine, to whom a public exhibition of themselves is mortal poison, may have some idea of the horrors of my situation—others can have none."

His terrors on this occasion arose to such an astonishing height, that they utterly overwhelmed his reason; for although he had endeavoured to prepare himself for his public duty, by attending closely at the office for several months, to examine the parliamentary journals, his application was rendered useless by that excess of diffidence, which made him conceive that whatever knowledge he might previously acquire, it would all forsake him at the bar of the House. This distressing apprehension increased to such a degree, as the time for his appearance approached, that when the day so anxiously dreaded arrived, he was unable to make the experiment. The very friends who called on him for the purpose of attending him to the House of Lords, acquiesced in the cruel necessity of his relinquishing the prospect of a station so severely formidable to a frame of such singular sensibility.

The conflict between the wishes of just affectionate ambition and the terrors of diffidence, so entirely overwhelmed his health and faculties, that after two learned and benevolent Divines (Mr. John Cowper, his brother, and the celebrated Mr. Martin Madan, his first cousin) had vainly endeavoured to establish a lasting tranquillity in his mind, by friendly and religious conversation, it was found necessary to remove him to St. Alban's, where he resided a considerable time, under the care of that eminent physician, Dr. Cotton, a scholar and a poet, who added to many accomplishments a peculiar sweetness of manners, in very advanced life, when I had the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with him.

The misfortune of mental derangement is a topic of such awful delicacy, that I consider it as the duty of a biographer rather to sink in tender silence, than to proclaim, with circumstantial and offensive temerity, the minute particulars of a calamity to which all human beings are exposed, and perhaps in proportion as they have received from nature those delightful but dangerous gifts, a heart of exquisite tenderness, and a mind of creative energy.



This is a sight for pity to peruse,  
 Till she resembles, faintly, what she views;  
 Till sympathy contract a kindred pain,  
 Pierc'd with the woes, that she laments in vain.  
 This, of all maladies that man infest,  
 Claims most compassion, and receives the least.

— — — —  
 — — — —  
 But, with a soul that ever felt the sting  
 Of sorrow, sorrow is a sacred thing.

— — — —  
 — — — —  
 'Tis not, as heads that never ache suppose,  
 Forg'ry of fancy, and a dream of woes.  
 Man is a harp, whose chords elude the sight,  
 Each yielding harmony, dispos'd aright;  
 The screws revers'd (a task which, if he please,  
 God in a moment executes with ease),  
 Ten thousand thousand strings at once go loose;  
 Lost, till he tune them, all their power and use.

— — — —  
 — — — —  
 No wounds like those a wounded spirit feels;  
 No cure for such, till God, who makes them, heals.  
 And thou, sad sufferer, under nameless ill,  
 That yields not to the touch of human skill,  
 Improve the kind occasion, understand  
 A Father's frown, and kiss the chast'ning hand!

It is in this awful and instructive light that Cowper himself teaches us to consider the calamity of which I am now speaking; and of which he, like his illustrious brother of Parnassus, the younger Tasso, was occasionally a most affecting example. Heaven appears to have given a striking lesson to mankind, to guard both virtue and genius against pride of heart, and pride of intellect, by thus suspending the affections and the talents of two most tender and sublime poets, who, in the purity of their lives, and in the splendour of their intellectual powers, will be ever deservedly reckoned among the pre-eminent of the earth.

From December, 1763, to the following July, the pure mind of Cowper appears to have laboured under the severest sufferings of morbid depression; but the medical skill of Dr. Cotton, and the cheerful, benignant manners of that accomplished physician, gradually succeeded, with the blessing of Heaven, in removing the undescribable load of religious despondency which had clouded the



admirable faculties of this innocent and upright man. His ideas of religion were changed from the gloom of terror and despair to the iustre of comfort and delight.

This juster and happier view of Evangelical truth is said to have arisen in his mind while he was reading the third chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Devout contemplation became more and more dear to his reviving spirit: resolving to relinquish all thoughts of a laborious profession, and all intercourse with the busy world, he acquiesced in a plan of settling at Huntingdon, by the advice of his brother, who, as a minister of the Gospel, and a Fellow of Bennet College, in Cambridge, resided in that University; a situation so near to the place chosen for Cowper's retirement, that it afforded to these affectionate brothers opportunities of easy and frequent intercourse. I regret that all the letters which passed between them have perished, and the more so as they sometimes corresponded in verse. John Cowper was also a poet. He had engaged to execute a translation of Voltaire's *Henriade*; and, in the course of the work, requested and obtained the assistance of William, who translated, as he informed me himself, two entire Cantos of the Poem. A specimen of this fraternal production, which appeared in a Magazine of the year 1759, will be found in the Appendix to these volumes.

In June, 1765, the reviving invalid removed to a private lodging in the town of Huntingdon; but Providence soon introduced him into a family which afforded him one of the most singular and valuable friends that ever watched an afflicted mortal in seasons of overwhelming adversity; that friend to whom the Poet exclaims, in the commencement of the *Task*,

And witness, dear companion of my walks,  
Whose arm this twentieth winter, I perceive  
Fast lock'd in mine, with pleasure, such as love,  
Confirm'd by long experience of thy worth,  
And well-tried virtues, could alone inspire;  
Witness a joy that thou hast doubled long!  
Thou know'st my praise of nature most sincere;  
And that my raptures are not conjured up  
To serve occasions of poetic pomp,  
But genuine, and art partner of them all.

These verses would be alone sufficient to make every poetical reader take a lively interest in the lady they describe; but these are far from being the only tribute which the gratitude of Cowper has paid to the endearing virtues of his female companion. More poe-

tical memorials of her merit will be found in these volumes, and in verse so exquisite, that it may be questioned if the most passionate love ever gave rise to poetry more tender or more sublime.

Yet, in this place, it appears proper to apprise the reader that it was not love, in the common acceptation of the word, which inspired these admirable eulogies. The attachment of Cowper to Mrs. Unwin, the Mary of the Poet! was an attachment perhaps unparalleled. Their domestic union, though not sanctioned by the common forms of life, was supported with perfect innocence, and endeared to them both, by their having struggled together through a series of sorrow. A spectator of sensibility, who had contemplated the uncommon tenderness of their attention to the wants and infirmities of each other in the decline of life, might have said of their singular attachment,

L'Amour n'a rien de si tendre,  
Ni L'Amitié de si doux.

As a connection so extraordinary forms a striking feature in the history of the Poet, the reader will probably be anxious to investigate its origin and progress. It arose from the following little incident.

The countenance and deportment of Cowper, though they indicated his native shyness, had yet very singular powers of attraction. On his first appearance in one of the churches at Huntingdon, he engaged the notice and respect of an amiable young man, William Cawthorne Unwin, then a student at Cambridge, who, having observed, after divine service, that the interesting stranger was taking a solitary turn under a row of trees, was irresistably led to share his walk, and to solicit his acquaintance.

They were soon pleased with each other; and the intelligent youth, charmed with the acquisition of such a friend, was eager to communicate the treasure to his parents, who had long resided in Huntingdon.

Mr. Unwin, the father, had, for some years, been master of a free-school in the town; but, as he advanced in life, he quitted that laborious situation, and, settling in a large convenient house, in the High-Street, contented himself with a few domestic pupils, whom he instructed in classical literature.

This worthy Divine, who was now far advanced in years, had been Lecturer to the two Churches in Huntingdon, before he obtained, from his College at Cambridge, the Living of Grimston. While he lived in expectation of this preferment, he had attached himself to a young lady of lively talents, and remarkably fond of

reading. This lady, who, in the process of time, and by a series of singular events, became the friend and guardian of Cowper, was the daughter of Mr. Cawthorne, a draper in Ely. She was married to Mr. Unwin on his succeeding to the preferment that he expected from his College, and settled with him on his Living of Grimston; but not liking the situation and society of that sequestered scene, she prevailed on her husband to establish himself in the town of Huntingdon, where he was known and respected.

They had resided there many years; and with their two only children, a son and a daughter (whom I remember to have noticed at Cambridge, in the year 1763, as a youth and a damsel of countenances uncommonly pleasing), they formed a cheerful and social family, when the younger Unwin, described by Cowper as

“ A friend,  
Whose worth deserves the warmest lay  
That ever friendship penn'd,”

presented to his parents the solitary stranger, on whose retirement he had benevolently intruded, and whose welfare he became more and more anxious to promote. An event highly pleasing and comfortable to Cowper soon followed this introduction: he was affectionately solicited by all the Unwins to relinquish his lonely lodging, and become a part of their family.

I am now arrived at that period in the personal history of my friend, when I am fortunately enabled to employ his own descriptive powers in recording the events and characters that particularly interested him, and in displaying the state of his mind at a remarkable season of his checkered life. The following are the most early Letters of this affectionate writer, with which time and chance, with the kindness of his friends and relations, have afforded me the advantage of adorning this work.

Among his juvenile intimates and correspondents he particularly regarded two gentlemen, who devoted themselves to different branches of the law, the present Lord Thurlow, and Joseph Hill, Esq. whose name appears in the second volume of Cowper's Poems, prefixed to a few verses of exquisite beauty; a brief epistle, that seems to have more of the genuine ease, spirit, and moral gaiety of Horace than any original epistle in the English language! From these two confidential associates of the Poet, in his unclouded years, I expected materials for the display of his early genius; but in the torrent of busy and splendid life, which bore the first of them to a mighty distance from his less ambitious fellow-student of

the Temple, the private letters and verses that arose from their youthful intimacy have perished.

Mr. Hill has kindly favoured me with a very copious collection of Cowper's letters to himself, through a long period of time; and although many of them are of a nature not suited to publication, yet many others will illustrate and embellish these volumes. The steadiness and integrity of Mr. Hill's regard for a person so much sequestered from his sight, gives him a peculiar title to stand first among those whom Cowper has honoured by addressing to them his highly interesting and affectionate letters. Many of these, which I shall occasionally introduce in the parts of the narrative to which they belong, may tend to confirm a truth, not unpleasing to the majority of readers, that the temperate zone of moderate fortune, equally removed from high and low life, is most favourable to the permanence of friendship.

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#### LETTER I.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq. Cook's Court, Carey-Street, London.

*Huntingdon, June 24, 1765.*

DEAR JOE,

The only recompense I can make you for your kind attention to my affairs during my illness, is to tell you that, by the mercy of God, I am restored to perfect health both of mind and body. This, I believe, will give you pleasure, and I would gladly do any thing from which you could receive it.

I left St. Alban's on the 17th, and arrived that day at Cambridge, spent some time there with my brother, and came hither on the 22d. I have a lodging that puts me continually in mind of our summer excursions: we have had many worse, and, except the size of it (which, however, is sufficient for a single man), but few better. I am not quite alone, having brought a servant with me from St. Alban's, who is the very mirror of fidelity and affection for his master. And whereas the Turkish Spy says he kept no servant, because he would not have an enemy in his house, I hired mine because I would have a friend. Men do not usually bestow these encomiums on their lackeys, nor do they usually deserve them; but I have had experience of mine, both in sickness and in health, and never saw his fellow.

The river Ouse, I forget how they spell it, is the most agreeable circumstance in this part of the world; at this town it is, I believe, as wide as the Thames at Windsor; nor does the silver Thames better deserve that epithet, nor has it more flowers upon its banks;

these being attributes which, in strict truth, belong to neither. Fluellin would say they are as like as my fingers to my fingers, and there is salmon in both. It is a noble stream to bathe in, and I shall make that use of it three times a week, having introduced myself to it for the first time this morning.

I beg you will remember me to all my friends, which is a task that will cost you no great pains to execute—particularly remember me to those of your own house, and believe me

Your very affectionate

W. M. COWPER.

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## LETTER II.

To Major COWPER, at the Park-House, near Hartford.

*Huntingdon, Oct. 18, 1765.*

MY DEAR MAJOR,

I have neither lost the use of my fingers nor my memory, though my unaccountable silence might incline you to suspect that I had lost both. The history of those things which have, from time to time, prevented my scribbling, would be not only insipid, but extremely voluminous; for which reasons they will not make their appearance at present, nor probably at any time hereafter. If my neglecting to write to you were a proof that I had never thought of you, and that had been really the case, five shillings a piece would have been much too little to give for the sight of such a monster! but I am no such monster, nor do I perceive in myself the least tendency to such a transformation. You may recollect that I had but very uncomfortable expectations of the accommodation I should meet with at Huntingdon. How much better is it to take our lot, where it shall please Providence to cast it, without anxiety! Had I chosen for myself, it is impossible I could have fixt upon a place so agreeable to me in all respects. I so much dreaded the thought of having a new acquaintance to make, with no other recommendation than that of being a perfect stranger, that I heartily wished no creature here might take the least notice of me. Instead of which, in about two months after my arrival, I became known to all the visitable people here, and do verily think it the most agreeable neighbourhood I ever saw.

Here are three families who have received me with the utmost civility, and two in particular have treated me with as much cordiality as if their pedigree and mine had grown upon the same sheepskin. Besides these, there are three or four single men who suit my temper to a hair. The town is one of the neatest in England, the country is fine for several miles about it, and the roads, which



are all turnpike, and strike out four or five different ways, and perfectly good all the year round. I mention this latter circumstance chiefly because my distance from Cambridge has made a horseman of me at last, or at least is likely to do so. My brother and I meet every week, by an alternate reciprocation of intercourse, as Sam Johnson would express it; sometimes I get a lift in a neighbour's chaise, but generally ride. As to my own personal condition, I am much happier than the day is long, and sunshine and candle-light alike see me perfectly contented. I get books in abundance, as much company as I choose, a deal of *comfortable leisure*, and enjoy better health, I think, than for many years past. What is there wanting to make me happy? Nothing, if I can but be as thankful as I ought, and I trust that he who has bestowed so many blessings upon me will give me gratitude to crown them all. I beg you will give my love to my dear cousin Maria, and to every body at the Park. If Mrs. Maitland is with you, as I suspect by a passage in Lady Hesketh's letter to me, pray remember me to her very affectionately; and believe me, my dear friend, ever yours,

WM. COWPER.

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LETTER III.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

October 25, 1765.

DEAR JOE,

I am afraid the month of October has proved rather unfavourable to the belle assemblée at Southampton, high winds and continual rains being bitter enemies to that agreeable lounge, which you and I are equally fond of. I have very cordially betaken myself to my books and my fire-side, and seldom leave them unless merely for exercise. I have added another family to the number of those I was acquainted with when you were here. Their name is Unwin—the most agreeable people imaginable, quite sociable, and as free from the ceremonious civility of country gentlemen as any I ever met with. They treat me more like a near relation than a stranger, and their house is always open to me. The old gentleman carries me to Cambridge in his chaise. He is a man of learning and good sense, and as simple as Parson Adams. His wife has a very uncommon understanding, has read much to excellent purpose, and is more polite than a dutchess. The son, who belongs to Cambridge, is a most amiable young man, and the daughter quite of a piece with the rest of the family. They see but little company, which suits me exactly; go when I will, I find a house full of peace and cordiality in all its parts, and am sure to



hear no scandal, but such discourse instead of it as we are all the better for. You remember Rousseau's description of an English morning; such are the mornings I spend with these good people, and the evenings differ from them in nothing, except that they are still more snug and quieter. Now I know them, I wonder that I liked Huntingdon so well before I knew them, and am apt to think I should find every place disagreeable that had not an Unwin belonging to it.

This incident convinces me of the truth of an observation I have often made, that when we circumscribe our estimate of all that is clever within the limits of our own acquaintance (which I at least have been always apt to do) we are guilty of a very uncharitable censure upon the rest of the world, and of a narrowness of thinking disgraceful to ourselves. Wapping and Redriff may contain some of the most amiable persons living, and such as one would go to Wapping and Redriff to make acquaintance with. You remember Mr. Gray's stanza,

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,  
The deep unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;  
Full many a rose is born to blush unseen,  
And waste its fragrance on the desert air.

Yours, dear Joe,  
WM. COWPER.

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#### LETTER IV.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, near Hartford.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I am much obliged to you for Pearsall's Meditations, especially as it furnishes me with an occasion of writing to you, which is all I have waited for. My friends must excuse me if I write to none but those who lay it fairly in my way to do so. The inference I am apt to draw from their silence is, that they wish *me* to be silent too.

I have great reason, my dear cousin, to be thankful to the gracious Providence that conducted me to this place. The lady in whose house I live is so excellent a person, and regards me with a friendship so truly christian, that I could almost fancy my own mother restored to life again, to compensate to me for all the friends I have lost, and all my connections broken. She has a son at Cambridge, in all respects worthy of such a mother, the most amiable young man I ever knew. His natural and acquired endowments are very

considerable; and as to his virtues, I need only say that he is a christian. It ought to be a matter of daily thanksgiving to me that I am admitted into the society of such persons, and I pray God to make me, and keep me worthy of them.

Your brother Martin has been very kind to me, having wrote to me twice in a stile which, though it once was irksome to me, to say the least, I now know how to value. I pray God to forgive me the many light things I have both said and thought of him and his labours. Hereafter I shall consider him as a burning and a shining light, and as one of those who, having turned many to righteousness, shall shine hereafter, as the stars, for ever and ever.

So much for the state of my heart; as to my spirits, I am cheerful and happy; and having peace with God, have peace within myself. For the continuance of this blessing I trust to him who gives it, and they who trust in him shall never be confounded.

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

*Huntingdon, at the Rev. Mr. Unwin's, March 11, 1766.*

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#### LETTER V.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.

*April 4, 1766.*

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I agree with you that letters are not essential to friendship; but they seem to be a natural fruit of it when they are the only intercourse that can be had. And a friendship producing no sensible effects is so like indifference, that the appearance may easily deceive even an acute discerner. I retract, however, all that I said in my last upon this subject, having reason to suspect that it proceeded from a principle which I would discourage in myself upon all occasions, even a pride that felt itself hurt upon a mere suspicion of neglect. I have so much cause for humility, and so much need of it too, and every little sneaking resentment is such an enemy to it, that I hope I shall never give quarter to any thing that appears in the shape of sullenness or self-consequence hereafter. Alas! if my best friend, who laid down his life for me, were to remember all the instances in which I have neglected him, and to plead them against me in judgment, where should I hide my guilty head in the day of recompense? I will pray, therefore, for blessings upon my friends, even though they cease to be so, and upon my enemies, though they continue such. The deceitfulness of the natural heart is inconceivable: I know well that I passed upon my friends for a person at least religiously inclined, if not ac-

tually religious; and what is more wonderful, I thought myself a Christian, when I had no faith in Christ, when I saw no beauty in him, that I should desire him; in short, when I had neither faith nor love, nor any Christian grace whatever, but a thousand seeds of rebellion instead, ever more springing up in enmity against him. But blessed be God, even the God who is become my salvation. The hail of affliction, and rebuke for sin, has swept away the refuge of lies. It pleased the Almighty in great mercy to set all my misdeeds before me. At length the storm being past, a quiet and peaceful serenity of soul succeeded, such as ever attends the gifts of lively faith in the all-sufficient atonement, and the sweet sense of mercy and pardon purchased by the blood of Christ. Thus did he break me and bind me up; thus did he wound me, and his hands made me whole. My dear cousin, I make no apology for entertaining you with the history of my conversion, because I know you to be a Christian in the sterling import of the appellation. This is, however, but a very summary account of the matter, neither would a letter contain the astonishing particulars of it. If we ever meet again in this world, I will relate them to you by word of mouth; if not, they will serve for the subject of a conference in the next; where, I doubt not, I shall remember and record them with a gratitude better suited to the subject.

Yours, my dear cousin, affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

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#### LETTER VI.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.

*April 17, 1766.*

MY DEAR COUSIN,

As in matters unattainable by reason, and unrevealed in the Scripture, it is impossible to argue at all; so in matters concerning which reason can only give a probable guess, and the Scripture has made no explicit discovery, it is, though not impossible to argue at all, yet impossible to argue to any certain conclusion. This seems to me to be the very case with the point in question—Reason is able to form many plausible conjectures concerning the possibility of our knowing each other in a future state, and the Scripture has, here and there, favoured us with an expression that looks at least like a slight intimation of it; but because a conjecture can never amount to a proof, and a slight intimation cannot be construed into a positive assertion, therefore I think we can never come to any absolute conclusion upon the subject. We may, indeed, reason about the plausibility of our conjectures, and

we may discuss, with great industry, and shrewdness of argument, those passages in the Scripture which seem to favour the opinion; but still no certain means having been afforded us, no certain end can be attained; and after all that can be said, it will still be doubtful whether we shall know each other or not.

As to arguments founded upon human reason only, it would be easy to muster up a much greater number on the affirmative side of the question than it would be worth my while to write or yours to read. Let us see, therefore, what the Scripture says, or seems to say, towards the proof of it; and of this kind of argument also I shall insert but a few of those which seem to me to be the fairest and clearest for the purpose: for, after all, a disputant on either side of this question is in danger of that censure of our blessed Lord's, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scripture, nor the power of God."

As to parables, I know it has been said, in the dispute concerning the intermediate state, that they are not argumentative; but this having been controverted by very wise and good men, and the parable of Dives and Lazarus having been used by such, to prove an intermediate state, I see not why it may not be as fairly used for the proof of any other matter, which it seems fairly to imply. In this parable we see that Dives is represented as knowing Lazarus, and Abraham as knowing them both; and the discourse between them is entirely concerning their respective characters and circumstances upon earth. Here, therefore, our Saviour seems to countenance the notion of a mutual knowledge and recollection, and if a soul that has perished shall know the soul that is saved, surely the heirs of salvation shall know and recollect each other.

In the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, the 2d chapter, and 19th verse, St. Paul says, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and our joy."

As to the hope which the Apostle has formed concerning them; he himself refers the accomplishment of it to the coming of Christ, meaning that then he should receive the recompense of his labours in their behalf: his joy and glory he refers likewise to the same period, both which would result from the sight of such numbers redeemed by the blessing of God upon his ministration, when he should present them before the great Judge, and say in the words of a greater than himself, "Lo! I, and the children whom thou hast given me." This seems to imply that the Apostle should know the converts, and the converts the Apostle, at least at the day of judgment; and if then, why not afterwards?

See also the 4th chapter of that Epistle, 13, 14, 16, which I have



not room to transcribe. Here the Apostle comforts them under their affliction, for their deceased brethren, exhorting them "Not to sorrow as without hope:" and what is the hope by which he teaches them to support their spirits? Even this, "That them which sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him." In other words, and by a fair paraphrase surely, telling them they are only taken from them for a season, and that they should receive them at the resurrection.

If you can take off the force of these texts, my dear cousin, you will go a great way towards shaking my opinion; if not, I think they must go a great way towards shaking yours.

The reason why I did not send you my opinion of Pearshall was, because I had not then read him. I have read him since, and like him much, especially the latter part of him; but you have whetted my curiosity to see the last letter by tearing it out. Unless you can give me a good reason why I should not see it, I shall inquire for the book the next time I go to Cambridge. Perhaps I may be partial to Hervey for the sake of his other writings, but I cannot give Pearshall the preference to him, for I think him one of the most scriptural writers in the world.

Yours,

WM. COWPER.

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### LETTER VII.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.

*April 18, 1766.*

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Having gone as far as I thought needful to justify the opinion of our meeting and knowing each other hereafter, I find, upon reflection, that I have done but half my business, and that one of the questions you proposed remains entirely unconsidered, viz. "Whether the things of our present state will not be of too low and mean a nature to engage our thoughts, or make a part of our communications in Heaven."

The common and ordinary occurrences of life no doubt, and even the ties of kindred, and of all temporal interests, will be entirely discarded from amongst that happy society, and possibly even the remembrance of them done away. But it does not, therefore, follow that our spiritual concerns, even in this life, will be forgotten; neither do I think that they can ever appear trifling to us in any the most distant period of eternity. God, as you say in reference to the Scripture, will be all in all. But does not that expression mean, that being admitted to so near an approach to our heavenly

Father and Redeemer, our whole nature, the soul, and all its faculties, will be employed in praising and adoring him? Doubtless, however, this will be the case; and if so, will it not furnish out a glorious theme of thanksgiving to recollect "The rock whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence we were digged?" To recollect the time when our faith, which, under the tuition and nurture of the Holy Spirit, has produced such a plentiful harvest of immortal bliss, was as a grain of mustard-seed, small in itself, promising but little fruit, and producing less? To recollect the various attempts that were made upon it by the world, the flesh, and the devil, and its various triumphs over all, by the assistance of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ? At present, whatever our convictions may be of the sinfulness and corruption of our nature, we can make but a very imperfect estimate either of our weakness or our guilt. Then, no doubt, we shall understand the full value of the wonderful salvation wrought out for us: and it seems reasonable to suppose, that, in order to form a just idea of our redemption, we shall be able to form a just one of the danger we have escaped; when we know how weak and frail we were, surely we shall be more able to render due praise and honour to his strength who fought for us; when we know completely the hatefulness of sin in the sight of God, and how deeply we were tainted by it, we shall know how to value the blood by which we are cleansed as we ought. The twenty-four Elders in the 5th of the Revelations, give glory to God for their redemption, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. This surely implies a retrospect to their respective conditions upon earth, and that each remembered out of what particular kindred and nation he had been redeemed; and if so, then surely the minutest circumstance of their redemption did not escape their memory. They who triumph over the Beast in the 15th chapter, sing the Song of Moses, the servant of God: and what was that Song? A sublime record of Israel's deliverance, and the destruction of her enemies in the Red-Sea, typical no doubt of the Song which the redeemed in Zion shall sing to celebrate their own salvation, and the defeat of their spiritual enemies. This again implies a recollection of the dangers they had before encountered, and the supplies of strength and ardour they had in every emergency received from the great Deliverer out of all. These quotations do not indeed prove that their warfare upon earth includes a part of their converse with each other, but they prove that it is a theme not unworthy to be heard even before the throne of God, and therefore it cannot be unfit for reciprocal communication.

But you doubt whether there is *any* communication between the blessed at all, neither do I recollect any Scripture that proves it,



or that bears any relation to the subject. But reason seems to require it so peremptorily, that a society without social intercourse seems to be a solecism, and a contradiction in terms, and the inhabitants of those regions are called, you know, in Scripture, an innumerable *company*, and an *assembly*, which seems to convey the idea of society as clearly as the word itself. Human testimony weighs but little in matters of this sort; but let it have all the weight it can: I know no greater names in divinity than Watts and Doddridge; they were both of this opinion, and I send you the words of the latter:

“Our *companions in glory* may probably assist us by their wise and good observations when we come to make the *Providence of God*, here upon earth, under the guidance and direction of our Lord Jesus Christ, the *subject of our mutual converse*.”

Thus, my dear cousin, I have spread out my reasons before you for an opinion which, whether admitted or denied, affects not the state or interest of our soul:—May our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, conduct us into his own Jerusalem, where there shall be no night, neither any darkness at all, where we shall be free even from innocent error, and perfect in the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Yours faithfully,

WM. COWPER.

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#### LETTER VIII.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.

*Huntingdon, Sept. 3, 1766.*

MY DEAR COUSIN,

It is reckoned, you know, a great achievement to silence an opponent in disputation, and your silence was of so long continuance, that I might well begin to please myself with the apprehension of having accomplished so arduous a matter. To be serious, however, I am not sorry that what I have said concerning our knowledge of each other in a future state, has a little inclined you to the affirmative: For though the redeemed of the Lord shall be sure of being as happy in that state as infinite power, employed by infinite goodness, can make them, and therefore it may seem immaterial whether we shall or shall not recollect each other hereafter; yet our present happiness at least is a little interested in the question. A parent, a friend, a wife, must needs, I think, feel a little heart-ache at the thought of an eternal separation from the objects of her regard: and not to know them when she meets them in another life, or never to meet them at all,

amounts, though not altogether, yet nearly to the same thing. Remember them, I think, she needs must. To hear that they are happy will indeed be no small addition to her own felicity; but to see them so will surely be a greater. Thus, at least, it appears to our present human apprehension; consequently, therefore, to think that when we leave them, we lose them for ever, that we must remain eternally ignorant whether they that were flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, partake with us of celestial glory, or are disinherited of their heavenly portion, must shed a dismal gloom over all our present connections. For my own part, this life is such a momentary thing, and all its interests have so shrunk in my estimation, since, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, I became attentive to the things of another, that, like a worm in the bud of all my friendships and affections, this very thought would eat out the heart of them all, had I a thousand; and were their date to terminate with this life, I think I should have no inclination to cultivate and improve such a fugitive business. Yet friendship is necessary to our happiness here, and built upon Christian principles, upon which only it can stand, is a thing even of religious sanction: for what is that love which the Holy Spirit, speaking by St. John, so much inculcates, but friendship? The only love which deserves the name; a love which can toil, and watch, and deny itself, and go to death for its brother. Worldly friendships are a poor weed compared with this, and even this union of spirit, in the bond of peace, would suffer in my mind at least, could I think it were only coeval with our earthly mansions. It may possibly argue great weakness in me, in this instance, to stand so much in need of future hopes to support me in the discharge of present duty. But so it is: I am far, I know, very far, from being perfect in Christian love, or any other divine attainment, and am therefore unwilling to forego whatever may help me in my progress.

You are so kind as to inquire after my health, for which reason I must tell you, what otherwise would not be worth mentioning, that I have lately been just enough indisposed to convince me that not only human life in general, but mine in particular, hangs by a slender thread. I am stout enough in appearance, yet a little illness demolishes me. I have had a severe shake, and the building is not so firm as it was. But I bless God for it with all my heart. If the inner man be but strengthened day by day, as I hope, under the renewing influences of the Holy Ghost, it will be no matter how soon the outward is dissolved. He who has in a manner raised me from the dead, in a literal sense, has given me the grace, I trust, to be ready at the shortest notice, to surrender up to him that life which I have twice received from him. Whether I live or die, I

désire it may be to his glory, and it must be to my happiness. I thank God that I have those amongst my kindred to whom I can write without reserve of sentiments upon this subject, as I do to you. A letter upon any other subject is more insipid to me than ever my task was when a school-boy; and I say not this in vain glory, God forbid! but to show you what the Almighty, whose name I am unworthy to mention, has done for me, the chief of sinners. Once he was a terror to me; and his service, O what a weariness it was! Now I can say I love him and his holy name, and am never so happy as when I speak of his mercies to me.

Yours, dear cousin,

WM. COWPER.

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### LETTER IX.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.

*Huntingdon, Oct. 20, 1766.*

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I am very sorry for poor Charles's illness, and hope you will soon have cause to thank God for his complete recovery. We have an epidemical fever in this country likewise, which leaves behind it a continual sighing, almost to suffocation; not that I have seen any instance of it, for blessed be God our family have hitherto escaped it, but such was the account I heard of it this morning.

I am obliged to you for the interest you take in my welfare, and for your inquiring so particularly after the manner in which my time passes here. As to amusements, I mean what the world calls such; we have none: the place indeed swarms with them, and cards and dancing are the professed business of almost all the *gentle* inhabitants of Huntingdon. We refuse to take part in them, or to be accessaries to this way of murdering our time, and by so doing have acquired the name of Methodists. Having told you how we *do not* spend our time, I will next say how we do. We breakfast commonly between eight and nine; till eleven we read either the Scripture, or the sermons of some faithful preacher of these holy mysteries: at eleven we attend divine service, which is performed here twice every day; and from twelve to three we separate, and amuse ourselves as we please. During that interval I either read in my own apartment, or walk, or ride, or work in the garden. We seldom sit an hour after dinner, but, if the weather permits, adjourn to the garden, where, with Mrs. Unwin and her son, I have generally the pleasure of religious conversation till tea-time. If it rains, or is too windy for walking, we either converse within

doors, or sing some hymns of Martin's collection, and, by the help of Mrs. Unwin's harpsichord, make up a tolerable concert, in which our hearts, I hope, are the best and most musical performers. After tea we sally forth to walk in good earnest. Mrs. Unwin is a good walker, and we have generally travelled about four miles before we see home again. When the days are short, we make this excursion in the former part of the day, between church-time and dinner. At night we read and converse as before, till supper, and commonly finish the evening either with hymns or a sermon; and, last of all, the family are called to prayers. I need not tell *you* that such a life as this is consistent with the utmost cheerfulness, accordingly we are all happy, and dwell together in unity as brethren. Mrs. Unwin has almost a maternal affection for me, and I have something very like a filial one for her, and her son and I are brothers. Blessed be the God of our salvation for such companions, and for such a life; above all, for an heart to like it.

I have had many anxious thoughts about taking orders, and I believe every new convert is apt to think himself called upon for that purpose; but it has pleased God, by means which there is no need to particularize, to give me full satisfaction as to the propriety of declining it: indeed, they who have the least idea of what I have suffered from the dread of public exhibitions, will readily excuse my never attempting them hereafter. In the mean time, if it please the Almighty, I may be an instrument of turning many to the truth in a private way, and hope that my endeavours in this way have not been entirely unsuccessful. Had I the zeal of Moses, I should want an Aaron to be my spokesman.

Yours ever, my dear cousin,

WM. COWPER:

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#### LETTER X.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford:

*March 11, 1767.*

MY DEAR COUSIN,

To find those whom I love clearly and strongly persuaded of Evangelical truth, gives me a pleasure superior to any that this world can afford me. Judge then whether your letter, in which the body and substance of a saving faith is so evidently set forth, could meet with a lukewarm reception at my hands, or be entertained with indifference! Would you know the true reason of my long silence? Conscious that my religious principles are generally excepted against, and that the conduct they produce, wherever they are heartily maintained, is still more the object of disap-



probation than those principles themselves; and remembering that I had made both the one and the other known to you, without having any clear assurance that our faith in Jesus was of the same stamp and character, I could not help thinking it possible that you might disapprove both my sentiments and practice; that you might think the one unsupported by Scripture, and the other whimsical and unnecessarily strict and rigorous, and, consequently, would be rather pleased with the suspension of a correspondence, which a different way of thinking upon so momentous a subject as that we wrote upon, was likely to render tedious and irksome to you.

I have told you the truth from my heart; forgive me these injurious suspicions, and never imagine that I shall hear from you upon this delightful theme without a real joy, or without prayer to God to prosper you in the way of his truth, his sanctifying and saving truth. The book you mention lies now upon my table. Marshal is an old acquaintance of mine; I have both read him and heard him read with pleasure and edification. The doctrines he maintains are, under the influence of the Spirit of Christ, the very life of my soul, and the soul of all my happiness; that Jesus is a *present* Saviour from the guilt of sin by his most precious blood, and from the power of it by his Spirit; that corrupt and wretched in ourselves, in him, and in *him only*, we are complete; that being united to Jesus by a lively faith, we have a solid and eternal interest in his obedience and sufferings, to justify us before the face of our heavenly Father; and that all this inestimable treasure, the earnest of which is in grace, and its consummation in glory, is given, freely *given* to us of God; in short, that he hath opened the kingdom of Heaven *to all believers*. These are the truths which, by the grace of God, shall ever be dearer to me than life itself; shall ever be placed next my heart as the throne whereon the Saviour himself shall sit, to sway all its motions, and reduce that world of iniquity and rebellion to a state of filial and affectionate obedience to the will of the most Holy.

These, my dear cousin, are the truths to which by nature we are enemies—they debase the sinner, and exalt the Saviour to a degree which the pride of our hearts (till almighty grace subdues them) is determined never to allow. May the Almighty reveal his Son in our hearts, continually more and more, and teach us to increase in love towards him continually, for having *given* us the unspeakable riches of Christ.

Yours faithfully,

WM. COWPER.

## LETTER XI.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

March 14, 1767.

I just add a line by way of Postscript to my last, to apprize you of the arrival of a very dear friend of mine at the Park on Friday next, the son of Mr. Unwin, whom I have desired to call on you in his way from London to Huntingdon. If you knew him as well as I do, you would love him as much. But I leave the young man to speak for himself, which he is very able to do. He is ready possessed of an answer to every question you can possibly ask concerning me, and knows my *whole story*, from first to last. I give you this previous notice, because I know you are not fond of strange faces, and because I thought it would, in some degree, save him the pain of announcing himself.

I am become a great florist and shrub doctor. If the Major can make up a small packet of seeds that will make a figure in a garden, where we have little else besides jessamine and honeysuckle; such a packet I mean as may be put in one's fob, I will promise to take great care of them, as I ought to value natives of the Park. They must not be such, however, as require great skill in the management, for at present I have no skill to spare.

I think Marshal one of the best writers, and the most spiritual expositor of Scripture, I ever read. I admire the strength of his argument, and the clearness of his reasonings upon those parts of our most holy Religion which are generally least understood (even by real Christians) as master-pieces of the kind. His section upon the union of the soul with Christ is an instance of what I mean, in which he has spoken of a most mysterious truth with admirable perspicuity, and with great good sense, making it all the while subservient to his main purport, of proving holiness to be the fruit and effect of faith.

I subjoin thus much upon that author, because, though you desire my opinion of him, I remember that in my last I rather left you to find it out by inference than expressed it as I ought to have done. I never met with a man who understood the plan of salvation better, or was more happy in explaining it.

## LETTER XII.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.

Huntingdon, April 3, 1767.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

You sent my friend Unwin home to us charmed with your kind reception of him, and with every thing he



saw at the Park. Shall I once more give you a peep into my vile and deceitful Heart? What motive do you think lay at the bottom of my conduct when I desired him to call upon you? I did not suspect at first that pride and vain-glory had any share in it, but quickly after I had recommended the visit to him I discovered in that fruitful soil the very root of the matter. You know I am a stranger here; all such are suspected characters, unless they bring their credentials with them. To this moment, I believe, it is matter of speculation in the place whence I came, and to whom I belong.

Though my friend, you may suppose, before I was admitted an inmate here, was satisfied that I was not a mere vagabond, and has since that time received more convincing proofs of my *sponsibility*, yet I could not resist the opportunity of furnishing him with ocular demonstration of it, by introducing him to one of my most splendid connections; that when he hears me called *that fellow Cowper*, which has happened heretofore, he may be able, upon unquestionable evidence, to assert my gentlemanhood, and relieve me from the weight of that opprobrious appellation. Oh Pride, Pride! it deceives with the subtlety of a serpent, and seems to walk erect though it crawls upon the earth. How will it twist and twine itself about to get from under the Cross, which it is the glory of our Christian calling to be able to bear with patience and good will. They who can guess at the heart of a stranger, and you especially, who are of a compassionate temper, will be more ready perhaps to excuse me in this instance than I can be to excuse myself. But in good truth it was abominable pride of heart, indignation and vanity, and deserves no better name. How should such a creature be admitted into those pure and sinless mansions where nothing shall enter that defileth, did not the Blood of Christ, applied by the hand of Faith, take away the guilt of sin, and leave no spot or stain behind it? Oh what continual need have I of an Almighty, all-sufficient Saviour? I am glad you are acquainted so *particularly* with *all* the circumstances of my story, for I know that your secrecy and discretion may be trusted with any thing. A thread of mercy run through all the intricate maze of those afflictive providences, so mysterious to myself at the time, and which must ever remain so to all who will not see what was the great design of them: at the judgment seat of Christ the whole shall be laid open. How is the rod of iron changed into a sceptre of love!

I thank you for the seeds; I have committed some of each sort to the ground, whence they will soon spring up like so many *mentos* to remind me of my friends at the Park.

## LETTER XIII.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.

*Huntingdon, July 13, 1767.*

MY DEAR COUSIN,

The newspaper has told you the truth. Poor Mr. Unwin, being flung from his horse, as he was going to his church on Sunday morning, received a dreadful fracture on the back part of his skull, under which he languished till Thursday evening, and then died. This awful dispensation has left an impression on our spirits which will not presently be worn off. He died in a poor cottage, to which he was carried immediately after his fall, about a mile from home, and his body could not be brought to his house till the spirit was gone to him who gave it. May it be a lesson to us to watch, since we know not the day nor the hour when our Lord cometh.

The effect of it upon my circumstances will only be a change of the place of my abode: for I shall still, by God's leave, continue with Mrs. Unwin, whose behaviour to me has always been that of a mother to a son. We know not yet where we shall settle, but we trust that the Lord, whom we seek, will go before us, and prepare a rest for us. We have employed our friend Haweis, Dr. Conyers, of Helmsley, in Ycrkshire, and Mr. Newton, of Olney, to look out for us, but at present are entirely ignorant under which of the three we shall settle, or whether under either. I have wrote to my aunt Madan to desire Martin to assist us with his inquiries. It is probable we shall stay here till Michaelmas.

## LETTER XIV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

*July 16, 1767.*

DEAR JOE,

Your wishes that the newspaper may have misinformed you are vain. Mr. Unwin is dead. and died in the manner there mentioned. At nine o'clock on Sunday morning he was in perfect health, and as likely to live twenty years as either of us, and before ten was stretched speechless and senseless upon a fleck-bed in a poor cottage, where (it being impossible to remove him) he died on Thursday evening. I heard his dying groans, the effect of great agony, for he was a strong man, and much convulsed in his last moments. The few short intervals of sense that were indulged him, he spent in earnest prayer, and in expressions of a firm trust and confidence in the only Saviour. To that strong hold

we must all resort at last, if we would have hope in our death; when every other refuge fails, we are glad to fly to the only shelter, to which we can repair to any purpose; and happy is it for us when the false ground we have chosen for ourselves being broken under us, we find ourselves obliged to have recourse to the Rock which can never be shaken—when this is our lot, we receive great and undeserved mercy.

Our society will not break up, but we shall settle in some other place, where is at present unknown.

Yours,

WM. COWPER.

These tender and confidential letters describe, in the clearest light, the singularly peaceful and devout life of this amiable writer during his residence at Huntingdon, and the melancholy accident which occasioned his removal to a distant county. Time and chance now introduced to the notice of Cowper the zealous and venerable friend, who became his intimate associate for many years, after having advised and assisted him in the important concern of fixing his future residence. Mr. Newton, then Curate of Olney, in Buckinghamshire, had been requested, by the late Dr. Conyers (who, in taking his degree in Divinity at Cambridge, had formed a friendship with young Mr. Unwin, and learned from him the religious character of his mother), to seize an opportunity, as he was passing through Huntingdon, of making a visit to an exemplary lady. This visit (so important in its consequences to the destiny of Cowper!) happened to take place within a few days after the calamitous death of Mr. Unwin. As a change of scene appeared desirable both to Mrs. Unwin and to the interesting Recluse, whom she had generously requested to continue under her care, Mr. Newton offered to assist them in removing to the pleasant and picturesque county in which he resided. They were willing to enter into the flock of a benevolent and animated pastor, whose religious ideas were so much in harmony with their own. He engaged for them a house at Olney, where they arrived on the 14th of October, 1767.

The time of Cowper, in his new situation, seems to have been chiefly devoted to religious contemplation, to social prayer, and to active charity. To this first of Christian virtues his heart was eminently inclined, and Providence very graciously enabled him to exercise and enjoy it to an extent far superior to what his own scanty fortune appeared to allow. He was very far from inheriting opulence on the death of his father, in 1756; and the singular cast of his own mind was such, that nature seemed to have ren-

dered it impossible for him either to covet or to acquire riches. His perfect exemption from worldly passions is forcibly displayed in the two following letters.

## LETTER XV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

*Olney, June 16, 1768.*

DEAR JOE,

I thank you for so full an answer to so empty an epistle. If Olney furnished any thing for your amusement you should have it in return, but occurrences here are as scarce as cucumbers at Christmas.

I visited St. Alban's about a fortnight since in person, and I visit it every day in thought. The recollection of what passed there, and the consequences that followed it, fill my mind continually, and make the circumstances of a poor transient half-spent life so insipid and unaffecting, that I have no heart to think or write much about them. Whether the nation are worshipping Mr. Wilkes, or any other idol, is of little moment to one who hopes and believes that he shall shortly stand in the presence of the great and blessed God. I thank him that he has given me such a deep impressed persuasion of this awful truth as a thousand worlds would not purchase from me. It gives a relish to every blessing, and makes every trouble light. Affectionately yours,  
W. C.

## LETTER XVI.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

DEAR JOE,

1769.

Sir Thomas crosses the Alps, and Sir Cowper, for that is his title at Olney, prefers his home to any other spot of earth in the world. Horace, observing this difference of temper in different persons, cried out, a good many years ago, in the true spirit of poetry, "How much one man differs from another!" This does not seem a very sublime exclamation in English, but I remember we were taught to admire it in the original.

My dear friend, I am obliged to you for your invitation; but being long accustomed to retirement, which I was always fond of, I am now more than ever unwilling to revisit those noisy and crowded scenes which I never loved, and which I now abhor. I remember you with all the friendship I ever professed, which is as much as I ever entertained for any man. But the strange and uncommon incidents of my life have given an entire new turn to



my whole character and conduct, and rendered me incapable of receiving pleasure from the same employments and amusements of which I could readily partake in former days.

I love you and yours; I thank you for your continued remembrance of me, and shall not cease to be their and your

Affectionate friend and servant,

W. COWPER.

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His retirement was ennobled by many private acts of beneficence, and his exemplary virtue was such, that the opulent sometimes delighted to make him their almoner. In his sequestered life at Olney, he ministered abundantly to the wants of the poor, from a fund, with which he was supplied by that model of extensive and unostentatious philanthropy, the late John Thornton, Esq. whose name he has immortalized in his Poem on Charity, still honouring his memory by an additional tribute to his virtues, in the following unpublished Poem, written immediately on his decease, in the year 1790.

Poets attempt the noblest task they can,  
Praising the author of all good in man;  
And next commemorating worthies lost,  
The dead, in whom that good abounded most.

Thee therefore of commercial fame, but more  
Fam'd for thy probity, from shore to shore;  
Thee, Thornton, worthy in some page to shine  
As honest, and more eloquent than mine,  
I mourn; or since thrice happy thou must be,  
The world, no longer thy abode, not thee;  
Thee to deplore were grief misspent indeed;  
It were to weep, that goodness has its meed,  
That there is bliss prepared in yonder sky,  
And glory for the virtuous, when they die.

What pleasure can the miser's fondled hoard,  
Or spendthrift's prodigal excess afford,  
Sweet, as the privilege of healing woe  
Suffer'd by virtue, combating below?  
That privilege was thine; Heaven gave thee means  
To illumine with delight the saddest scenes,  
Till thy appearance chas'd the gloom, forlorn  
As midnight, and despairing of a morn.



Thou had'st an industry in doing good,  
 Restless as his, who toils and sweats for food.  
 Av'rice in thee was the desire of wealth  
 By rust unperishable, or by stealth.  
 And if the genuine worth of gold depend  
 On application to its noblest end,  
 Thine had a value in the scales of Heaven,  
 Surpassing all, that mine or mint had given:  
 And though God made thee of a nature prone  
 To distribution, boundless of thy own,  
 And still, by motives of religious force,  
 Impell'd thee more to that heroic course;  
 Yet was thy liberality discreet;  
 Nice in its choice, and of a temp'rate heat;  
 And though in act unwearied, secret still,  
 As, in some solitude, the summer rill  
 Refreshes, where it winds, the faded green,  
 And cheers the drooping flowers, unheard, unseen.

Such was thy Charity; no sudden start,  
 After long sleep of passion in the heart,  
 But steadfast principle, and in its kind  
 Of close alliance with th' eternal mind;  
 Trac'd easily to its true source above,  
 To him, whose works bespeak his nature, love.  
 Thy bounties all were Christian, and I make  
 This record of thee for the Gospel's sake;  
 That the incredulous themselves may see  
 Its use and power exemplified in thee.

This simple and sublime eulogy was perfectly merited; and among the happiest actions of this truly liberal man, we may reckon his furnishing to a character so reserved, and so retired as Cowper, the means of his enjoying the gratification of active and costly beneficence; a gratification, in which the sequestered Poet had nobly indulged himself before his acquaintance with Mr. Newton afforded him an opportunity of being concerned in distributing the private, yet extensive bounty of an opulent and exemplary merchant.

Cowper, before he quitted St. Alban's, assumed the charge of a necessitous child; to extricate him from the perils of being educated by very profligate parents, he put him to school at Huntingdon, removed him on his own removal to Olney, and finally settled him as an apprentice in St. Alban's.

The warm, benevolent, and cheerful enthusiasm of Mr. Newton induced his friend Cowper to participate so abundantly in his devout occupation, that the Poet's time and thoughts were more and more engrossed by religious pursuits. He wrote many hymns, and occasionally directed the prayers of the poor. Where the nerves are tender, and the imagination tremblingly alive, any little excess, in the exercise of the purest piety, may be attended with such perils to corporeal and mental health, as men of a more firm and hardy fibre would be far from apprehending. Perhaps the life that Cowper led, on his settling in Olney, had a tendency to increase the morbid propensity of his frame, though it was a life of admirable sanctity.

Absorbed as he was in devotion, he forgot not his distant friends, and particularly his amiable relation and correspondent of the Park-House, near Hartford. The following letter to that lady has no date, but it was probably written soon after his establishment at Olney. The remarkable memento in the postscript was undoubtedly introduced to counteract an idle rumour, arising from the circumstance of his having settled himself under the roof of a female friend, whose age, and whose virtues, he considered as sufficient securities to ensure her reputation.

## LETTER XVII.

To Mrs. COWPER.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I have not been behind-hand in reproaching myself with neglect, but desire to take shame to myself for my unprofitableness in this, as well as in all other respects. I take the next immediate opportunity however of thanking you for yours, and of assuring you that instead of being surprized at your silence, I rather wonder that you, or any of my friends, have any room left for so careless and negligent a correspondent in your memories. I am obliged to you for the intelligence you send me of my kindred, and rejoice to hear of their welfare. He who settles the bounds of our habitations has at length cast our lot at a great distance from each other; but I do not therefore forget their former kindness to me, or cease to be interested in their well-being. You live in the centre of a world I know you do not delight in. Happy are you, my dear friend, in being able to discern the insufficiency of all it can afford to fill and satisfy the desires of an immortal soul. That God who created us for the enjoyment of himself, has determined, in mercy, that it shall fail us here, in order that the blessed result of all our inquiries after happiness in the creature may be a warm pursuit, and a close attachment to our true in-

terest, in fellowship and communion with him, through the name and mediation of a dear Redeemer. I bless his goodness and grace that I have any reason to hope I am a partaker with you in the desire after better things than are to be found in a world polluted with sin, and therefore devoted to destruction. May he enable us both to consider our present life in its only true light, as an opportunity put into our hands to glorify him amongst men, by a conduct suited to his word and will. I am miserably defective in this holy and blessed art; but I hope there is at the bottom of all my sinful infirmities, a sincere desire to live just so long as I may be enabled, in some poor measure, to answer the end of my existence in this respect, and then to obey the summons, and attend him in a world where they who are his servants here shall pay him an un sinful obedience for ever. Your dear mother is too good to me, and puts a more charitable construction upon my silence than the fact will warrant. I am not better employed than I should be in corresponding with her. I have that within which hinders me wretchedly in every thing that I ought to do, but is prone to trifle, and let time and every good thing run to waste. I hope, however, to write to her soon.

My love and best wishes attend Mr. Cowper, and all that inquire after me. May God be with you, to bless you, and do you good by all his dispensations: don't forget me when you are speaking to our best Friend before his mercy-seat.

Yours ever,

W. COWPER.

N. B. I am not married.

In the year 1769 the Lady to whom the preceding letters are addressed was involved in domestic affliction; and the following, which the Poet wrote to her on the occasion, is so full of genuine piety and true pathos, that it would be an injury to his memory to suppress it.

#### LETTER XVIII.

*Olney, Aug. 31, 1769.*

To Mrs. COWPER.

DEAR COUSIN,

A letter from your brother Frederick brought me yesterday the most afflicting intelligence that has reached me these many years. I pray to God to comfort you, and to enable you to sustain this heavy stroke with that resignation to his will which none but himself can give, and which he gives to none but his own children. How blessed and happy is your lot, my dear

friend, beyond the common lot of the greater part of mankind, that you know what it is to draw near to God in prayer, and are acquainted with a Throne of Grace! You have resources in the infinite love of a dear Redeemer, which are withheld from millions; and the promises of God, which are yea and amen in Jesus, are sufficient to answer all your necessities, and to sweeten the bitterest cup which your heavenly Father will ever put into your hand. May he now give you liberty to drink at these wells of salvation, till you are filled with consolation and peace in the midst of trouble. He has said, when thou passest through the fire, I will be with thee, and when through the floods, they shall not overflow thee. You have need of such a word as this, and he knows your need of it, and the time of necessity is the time when he will be sure to appear in behalf of those who trust him. I bear you and yours upon my heart before him night and day, for I never expect to hear of a distress which shall call upon me with a louder voice to pray for the sufferer. I know the Lord hears me for myself, vile and sinful as I am, and believe, and am sure, that he will hear me for you also. He is the friend of the widow, and the father of the fatherless, even God in his holy habitation; in all our afflictions he is afflicted, and chastens us in mercy. Surely he will sanctify this dispensation to you, do you great and everlasting good by it, make the world appear like dust and vanity in your sight, as it truly is, and open to your view the glories of a better country, where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor pain, but God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes for ever. Oh that comfortable word! "I have chosen thee in the furnaces of affliction;" so that our very sorrows are evidences of our calling, and he chastens us because we are his children.

My dear cousin, I commit you to the word of his grace, and to the comforts of his Holy Spirit. Your life is needful for your family; may God in mercy to them prolong it, and may he preserve you from the dangerous effects which a stroke like this might have upon a frame so tender as yours. I grieve with you—I pray for you—could I do more I would, but God must comfort you.

Yours, in our dear Lord Jesus,

W. COWPER.

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In the following year the tender feelings of Cowper were called forth by family affliction, that pressed more immediately on himself; he was hurried to Cambridge by the dangerous illness of his brother, then residing as a Fellow in Bennet College. An affection truly fraternal had ever subsisted between the brothers,



and the reader will recollect what the Poet has said in one of his letters concerning their social intercourse while he resided at Huntingdon.

In the two first years of his residence at Olney, he had been repeatedly visited by Mr. John Cowper; and how cordially he returned his kindness and his attention the following letter will testify, which was probably written in the chamber of the invalid, whom the writer so fervently wished to restore.

#### LETTER XIX.

To Mrs. COWPER.

*March 5, 1770.*

My brother continues much as he was. His case is a very dangerous one; an imposthume of the liver, attended by an asthma and dropsy. The Physician has little hope of his recovery; I believe I might say none at all, only being a friend, he does not formally give him over by ceasing to visit him, lest it should sink his spirits. For my own part I have no expectation of his recovery, except by a signal interposition of Providence in answer to prayer. His case is clearly out of the reach of medicine; but I have seen many a sickness healed, where the danger has been equally threatening, by the only Physician of value. I doubt not he will have an interest in your prayers, as he has in the prayers of many. May the Lord incline his ear, and give an answer of peace. I know it is good to be afflicted. I trust that you have found it so, and that under the teaching of God's own Spirit we shall both be purified.—It is the desire of my soul to seek a better country, where God shall wipe away all tears from the eyes of his people, and where, looking back upon the ways by which he has led us, we shall be filled with everlasting wonder, love and praise. I must add no more.

Yours ever,

W. COWPER,

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The sickness and death of his learned, pious, and affectionate brother, made a very strong impression on the tender heart and mind of Cowper—an impression so strong that it induced him to write a narrative of the remarkable circumstances which occurred at the time. He sent a copy of this narrative to Mr. Newton. The paper is curious in every point of view, and so likely to awaken sentiments of piety in minds where it may be most desirable to have them awakened, that Mr. Newton has thought it his duty to print it.



Here it is incumbent on me to introduce a brief account of the interesting person whom the Poet regarded so tenderly. John Cowper was born in 1737; being designed for the Church, he was privately educated by a Clergyman, and became eminent for the extent and variety of his erudition in the University of Cambridge. His conduct and sentiments, as a Minister of the Gospel, are copiously displayed by his brother, in recording the remarkable close of his life. Bennet College, of which he was a Fellow, was his usual residence, and it became the scene of his death, on the 20th of March, 1770. Fraternal affection has executed a perfectly just and graceful description of his character, both in prose and verse. I transcribe both, as highly honourable to these exemplary brethren, who may indeed be said to have dwelt together in unity.

“He was a man,” says the Poet in speaking of his deceased brother, “of a most candid and ingenuous spirit; his temper remarkably sweet, and in his behaviour to me he had always manifested an uncommon affection. His outward conduct, so far as it fell under my notice, or I could learn it by the report of others, was perfectly decent and unblameable. There was nothing vicious in any part of his practice; but being of a studious, thoughtful turn, he placed his chief delight in the acquisition of learning, and made such acquisitions in it, that he had but few rivals in that of a classical kind. He was critically skilled in the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages; was beginning to make himself master of the Syriac, and perfectly understood the French and Italian; the latter of which he could speak fluently. Learned, however, as he was, he was easy and cheerful in his conversation, and entirely free from the stiffness which is generally contracted by men devoted to such pursuits.”

I had a brother once :

Peace to the memory of a man of worth !  
 A man of letters, and of manners too !  
 Of manners sweet as virtue always wears  
 When gay good humour dresses her in smiles !  
 He grac'd a College, in which order yet  
 Was sacred, and was honour'd, lov'd, and wept  
 By more than one, themselves conspicuous there.

Another interesting tribute to his memory will be found in the following letter.

## LETTER XX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

*May 8, 1770.*

DEAR JOE,

Your letter did not reach me till the last post, when I had not time to answer it. I left Cambridge immediately after my brother's death.

I am obliged to you for the particular account you have sent me \* \* \* \* \*

He to whom I have surrendered myself and all my concerns, has otherwise appointed, and let his will be done. He gives me much, which he withholds from others; and if he was pleased to withhold all that makes an outward difference between me and the poor mendicant in the street, it would still become me to say, his will be done.

It pleased God to cut short my brother's connections and expectations here, yet not without giving him lively and glorious views of a better happiness than any he could propose to himself in such a world as this. Notwithstanding his great learning (for he was one of the chief men in the University in that respect) he was candid and sincere in his inquiries after truth. Though he could not come into my sentiments when I first acquainted him with them, nor in the many conversations which I afterwards had with him upon the subject, could he be brought to acquiesce in them as scriptural and true, yet I had no sooner left St. Alban's than he began to study with the deepest attention those points in which we differed, and to furnish himself with the best writers upon them. His mind was kept open to conviction for five years, during all which time he laboured in this pursuit with unwearied diligence, as leisure and opportunity were afforded. Amongst his dying words were these, "Brother, I thought you wrong, yet wanted to believe as you did. I found myself not able to believe, yet always thought I should one day be brought to do so." From the study of books he was brought, upon his death-bed, to the study of himself, and there learnt to renounce his righteousness, and his own most amiable character, and to submit himself to the righteousness which is of God by faith. With these views he was desirous of death. Satisfied of his interest in the blessing purchased by the blood of Christ, he prayed for death with earnestness, felt the approaches of it with joy, and died in peace.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. COWPER.

The exquisite sensibility of Cowper could not fail to suffer deeply on the loss of such a brother; but it is the peculiar blessing of a religious turn of mind, that it serves as an antidote against the corrosive influence of sorrow. Devotion, if it had no other beneficial effect on the human character, would be still inestimable to man, as a medicine for the anguish he feels in losing the objects of his affection. How far it proved so in the present case the reader will be enabled to judge by a letter, in which Cowper describes his sensations on this awful event to one of his favourite correspondents.

## LETTER XXI.

To Mrs. COWPER, Holles-Street, Cavendish-Square.

*Olney, June 7, 1770.*

DEAR COUSIN,

I am obliged to you for sometimes thinking of an unseen friend, and bestowing a letter upon me. It gives me pleasure to hear from you, especially to find that our gracious Lord enables you to weather out the storms you meet with, and to cast anchor within the veil.

You judge rightly of the manner in which I have been affected by the Lord's late dispensation towards my brother. I found in it cause of sorrow, that I lost so near a relation, and one so deservedly dear to me, and that he left me just when our sentiments upon the most interesting subject became the same; but much more cause of joy, that it pleased God to give me clear and evident proof that he had changed his heart, and adopted him into the number of his children. For this I hold myself peculiarly bound to thank him, because he might have done all that he was pleased to do for him, and yet have afforded him neither strength nor opportunity to declare it. I doubt not that he enlightens the understandings, and works a gracious change in the hearts of many in their last moments, whose surrounding friends are not made acquainted with it.

He told me, that from the time he was first ordained he began to be dissatisfied with his religious opinions, and to suspect that there were greater things concealed in the Bible than were generally believed or allowed to be there. From the time when I first visited him after my release from St. Alban's, he began to read upon the subject. It was at that time I informed him of the views of divine truth which I had received in that school of affliction. He laid what I said to heart, and began to furnish himself with the best writers on the controverted points, whose works he read with great diligence and attention, comparing them all the while with the Scripture. None ever truly and ingenuously sought the truth

but they found it. A spirit of earnest inquiry is the gift of God, who never says to any, seek ye my face in vain. Accordingly, about ten days before his death, it pleased the Lord to dispel all his doubts, to reveal in his heart the knowledge of the Saviour, and to give him firm and unshaken peace in the belief of his ability and willingness to save. As to the affair of the fortune-teller, he never mentioned it to me, nor was there any such paper found as you mention. I looked over all his papers before I left the place, and, had there been such a one, must have discovered it. I have heard the report from other quarters, but no other particulars than that the woman foretold him when he should die. I suppose there may be some truth in the matter; but whatever he might think of it before his knowledge of the truth, and however extraordinary her predictions might really be, I am satisfied that he had then received far other views of the wisdom and majesty of God than to suppose that he would entrust his secret counsels to a vagrant, who did not mean, I suppose, to be understood to have received her intelligence from the Fountain of Light, but thought herself sufficiently honoured by any who would give her credit for a secret intercourse of this kind with the Prince of Darkness.

Mrs. Unwin is much obliged to you for your kind inquiry after her. She is well, I thank God, as usual, and sends her respects to you. Her son is in the ministry, and has the Living of Stock, in Essex. We were last week alarmed with an account of his being dangerously ill. Mrs. Unwin went to see him, and in a few days left him out of danger.

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The letters of the afflicted Poet to this amiable and sympathetic relation have already afforded to my reader an insight into the pure recesses of Cowper's wonderful mind at some remarkable periods of his life, and if my reader's opinion of these letters is consonant to my own, he will feel concerned, as I do, to find a chasm of ten years in this valuable correspondence; the more so, as it was chiefly occasioned by a new, a long, and severe visitation of that mental malady, which periodically involved in calamitous oppression the superior faculties of this interesting sufferer. His extreme depression seems not to have recurred immediately on the shock of his brother's death. In the autumn of the year in which he sustained that affecting loss, he wrote the following serious but animated letter to Mr. Hill.

LETTER XXII.  
To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

DEAR JOE,

Sept. 25, 1770.

I have not done conversing with terrestrial objects, though I should be happy were I able to hold more continual converse with a friend above the skies. He has my heart, but he allows a corner in it for all who show me kindness, and therefore one for you. The storm of '63 made a wreck of the friendships I had contracted in the course of many years, yours excepted, which has survived the tempest.

I thank you for your repeated invitation. Singular thanks are due to you for so *singular* an instance of your regard. I could not leave Olney unless in a case of absolute necessity, without much inconvenience to myself and others.

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In his sequestered life he seems to have been much consoled and entertained by the society of his pious friend, Mr. Newton, in whose religious pursuits he appears to have taken an active part, by the composition of sixty-eight hymns. Mr. Newton wished and expected him to have contributed a much larger number, as he has declared in the preface to that collection of hymns which contains these devotional effusions of Cowper distinguished by the initial letter of his name. The volume composed for the inhabitants of Olney was the joint production of the Divine and the Poet, and intended, as the former expressly says in his Preface, "as a monument to perpetuate the remembrance of an intimate and endeared friendship. With this pleasing view," continues Mr. Newton, "I entered upon my part, which would have been smaller than it is, and the book would have appeared much sooner, and in a very different form, if the wise though mysterious Providence of God had not seen fit to cross my wishes. We had not proceeded far upon our proposed plan, before my dear friend was prevented, by a long and affecting indisposition, from affording me any further assistance." The severe illness of the Poet, to which these expressions relate, began in 1773, and extended beyond the date of the Preface (from which they are quoted), February 15, 1779.

These social labours of the Poet with an exemplary man of God, for the purpose of promoting simple piety among the lower classes of the people, must have been delightful, in a high degree, to the benevolent heart of Cowper; and I am persuaded he alludes to his own feelings on this subject in the following passage from his Poem on Conversation.



True bliss, if man may reach it, is compos'd  
 Of hearts in union mutually disclos'd ;  
 And, farewell else all hope of pure delight !  
 Those hearts should be reclaim'd, renew'd, upright :  
 Bad men, profaning friendship's hallowed name,  
 Form in its stead a covenant of shame :

\* \* \* \* \*  
 \* \* \* \* \*

But souls that carry on a blest exchange  
 Of joys they meet with in their heavenly range,  
 And with a fearless confidence make known  
 The sorrows sympathy esteems its own ;  
 Daily derive increasing light and force  
 From such communion, in their pleasant course ;  
 Feel less the journey's roughness, and its length,  
 Meet their opposers with united strength,  
 And one in heart, in interest, and design,  
 Gird up each other to the race divine.

Such fellowship in literary labour, for the noblest of purposes, must be delightful indeed, if attended with success, and, at all events, it is entitled to respect: yet it may be doubted if the intense zeal with which Cowper embarked in this fascinating pursuit, had not a dangerous tendency to undermine his very delicate health.

Such an apprehension naturally arises from a recollection of what medical writers of great ability have said on the awful subject of mental derangement. Whenever the slightest tendency to that misfortune appears, it seems expedient to guard a tender spirit from the attractions of Piety herself. So fearfully and wonderfully are we made, that man, in all conditions, ought, perhaps, to pray that he never may be led to think of his Creator and of his Redeemer either too little or too much.

But if the charitable and religious zeal of the Poet led him into any excesses of devotion, injurious to the extreme delicacy of his nervous system, he is only the more entitled to admiration and to pity: indeed, his genius, his virtues, and his misfortunes were calculated to excite those tender and temperate passions in their purest state, and to the highest degree. It may be questioned if any mortal could be more sincerely beloved and revered than Cowper was by those who were best acquainted with his private hours.

The season was now arrived when the firm friendship of Mrs. Unwin was put to the severest of trials, and when her conduct was such as to deserve those rare rewards of grateful attention and tenderness, which, when she herself became the victim of age and

infirmity, she received from that exemplary being, who considered himself indebted to her friendly vigilance for his life, and who never forgot an obligation when his mind was itself.

In 1773 he sunk into such severe paroxysms of religious despondency, that he required an attendant of the most gentle, vigilant, and inflexible spirit. Such an attendant he found in that faithful guardian whom he had professed to love as a mother, and who watched over him, during this long fit of depressive malady, extended through several years, with that perfect mixture of tenderness and fortitude which constitutes the inestimable influence of maternal protection. I wish to pass rapidly over this calamitous period, and shall only observe, that nothing could surpass the sufferings of the patient, or the care of his nurse. That meritorious care received from Heaven the most delightful of rewards, in seeing the pure and powerful mind, to whose restoration it had contributed so much, not only gradually restored to the common enjoyments of life, but successively endowed with new and marvellous funds of diversified talents, and courageous application.

The spirit of Cowper emerged, by slow degrees, from its very deep dejection; and before his mind was sufficiently recovered to employ itself on literary composition, it sought, and found, much salutary amusement in educating a little group of tame Hares. On his expressing a wish to divert himself by rearing a single Leveret, the good-nature of his neighbours supplied him with three. The variety of their dispositions became a source of great entertainment to his compassionate and contemplative spirit. One of the trio he has celebrated in the *Task*; and a very animated minute account of this singular family humanized, and described most admirably by himself, in prose, appeared first in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and has been recently inserted in the second volume of his *Poems*. These interesting animals had not only the honour of being cherished and celebrated by a poet, but the pencil has also contributed to their renown; and their portraits, engraved from a drawing presented to Cowper by a friend unknown, may serve as a little embellishment to this life of their singularly tender and benevolent protector.

His three tame Hares, Mrs. Unwin, and Mr. Newton, were, for a considerable time, the only companions of Cowper; but as Mr. Newton was removed to a distance from his afflicted friend, by preferment in London, to which he was presented by that liberal encourager of active piety, Mr. Thornton, the friendly Divine, before he left Olney, in 1780, humanely triumphed over the strong reluctance of Cowper to see a stranger, and kindly introduced him to the regard and good offices of the Rev. Mr. Bull, of Newport-

Pagnell, who, from that time, considering it as a duty to visit the invalid once a fortnight, acquired, by degrees, his cordial and confidential esteem.

The affectionate temper of Cowper inclined him particularly to exert his talents, at the request of his friends, even in seasons when such exertion could hardly have been made without a painful degree of self-command.

At the suggestion of Mr. Newton we have seen him writing a series of hymns: at the request of Mr. Bull he translated several spiritual songs from the mystical poetry of Madame de la Mothe Guyon, the tender and fanciful enthusiast of France, whose talents and misfortunes drew upon her a long series of persecution from many acrimonious bigots, and secured to her the friendship of the mild and indulgent Fenelon!

We shall perceive, as we advance, that the greater works of Cowper were also written at the express desire of persons whom he particularly regarded; and it may be remarked, to the honour of friendship, that he considered its influence as the happiest inspiration; or, to use his own expressive words,

The Poet's lyre, to fix his fame,  
Should be the Poet's heart:  
Affection lights a brighter flame  
Than ever blaz'd by art.

The poetry of Cowper is itself an admirable illustration of this maxim; and perhaps the maxim may point to the prime source of that uncommon force and felicity with which this most feeling poet commands the affection of his reader.

In delineating the life of an author, it seems the duty of biography to indicate the degree of influence which the warmth of his heart produced on the fertility of his mind. But those mingled flames of friendship and poetry which were to burst forth with the most powerful effect in the compositions of Cowper, were not yet kindled. His depressive malady had suspended the exercise of his genius for several years, and precluded him from renewing his correspondence with the relation whom he so cordially regarded, in Hartfordshire, except by the brief letters on pecuniary concerns, in 1779. But in the spring of the following year, a letter to Mr. Hill abundantly proves that he had regained the free exercise of his talents, both serious and sportive.

LETTER XXIII.  
To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

*Olney, May 6, 1780.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am much obliged to you for your speedy answer to my queries. I know less of the law than a country attorney, yet sometimes I think I have almost as much business. My former connection with the profession has got wind, and though I earnestly profess, and protest, and proclaim it abroad, that I know nothing of the matter, they cannot be persuaded to believe that a head once endued with a legal perriwig can ever be deficient in those natural endowments it is supposed to cover. I have had the good fortune to be once or twice in the right, which, added to the cheapness of a gratuitous counsel, has advanced my credit to a degree I never expected to attain in the capacity of a Lawyer. Indeed, if two of the wisest in the science of jurisprudence may give opposite opinions upon the same point, which does not unfrequently happen, it seems to be a matter of indifference whether a man answers by rule or at a venture. He that stumbles upon the right side of the question is just as useful to his client as he that arrives at the same end by regular approaches, and is conducted to the mark he aims at by the greatest authorities.

\* \* \* \* \*

These violent attacks of a distemper, so often fatal, are very alarming to all who esteem and respect the Chancellor as he deserves. A life of confinement, and of anxious attention to important objects, where the habit is bilious to such a terrible degree, threatens to be but a short one; and I wish he may not be made a text for men of reflection to moralize upon, affording a conspicuous instance of the transient and fading nature of all human accomplishments and attainments.

Yours affectionately,

W. COWPER.

At this time his attention was irresistably recalled to his cousin, Mrs. Cowper, by hearing that she was deeply afflicted; and he wrote to her the following letter on the loss of her brother, Frederick Madan, a soldier, who died in America, after having distinguished himself by poetical talents, as well as by military virtues.

LETTER XXIV.  
To Mrs. COWPER.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

May 10, 1780.

I do not write to comfort you; that office is not likely to be well performed by one who has no comfort for himself; nor to comply with an impertinent ceremony, which, in general, might well be spared upon such occasions; but because I would not seem indifferent to the concerns of those I have so much reason to esteem and love. If I did not sorrow for your brother's death, I should expect that nobody would for mine: when I knew him he was much beloved, and I doubt not continued to be so. To live and die together is the lot of a few happy families, who hardly know what a separation means, and one sepulchre serves them all; but the ashes of our kindred are dispersed indeed. Whether the American gulf has swallowed up any other of my relations I know not; it has made many mourners.

Believe me, my dear cousin, though after long silence, which perhaps nothing less than the present concern could have prevailed with me to interrupt, as much as ever,

Your affectionate kinsman,

W. C.

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The next letter to Mr. Hill affords a striking proof of Cowper's compassionate feelings towards the poor around him.

LETTER XXV.  
To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

MON AMI,

July 8, 1780.

If ever you take the tip of the Chancellor's ear between your finger and thumb, you can hardly improve the opportunity to better purpose, than if you should whisper into it the voice of compassion and lenity to the lace-makers. I am an eye witness of their poverty, and do know, that hundreds in this little town are upon the point of starving, and that the most unremitting industry is but barely sufficient to keep them from it. I know that the bill by which they would have been so fatally affected is thrown out; but Lord Stormont threatens them with another; and if another like it should pass, they are undone. We lately sent a petition from hence to Lord Dartmouth; I signed it, and am sure the contents are true. The purport of it was to inform him that there are very near one thousand two hundred lace-makers in this beggarly town, the most of whom had reason enough, while the bill



was in agitation, to look upon every loaf they bought as the last they should ever be able to earn. I can never think it good policy to incur the certain inconvenience of ruining thirty thousand, in order to prevent a remote and possible damage, though to a much greater number. The measure is like a scythe, and the poor lace-makers are the sickly crop that trembles before the edge of it. The prospect of peace with America is like the streak of dawn in their horizon; but this bill is like a black cloud behind it, that threatens their hope of a comfortable day with utter extinction.

I did not perceive till this moment that I had tacked two similes together, a practice, which, though warranted by the example of Homer, and allowable in an epic poem, is rather luxuriant and licentious in a letter; lest I should add another, I conclude.



His affectionate effort in renewing his correspondence with Mrs. Cowper, to whom he had been accustomed to pour forth his heart without reserve, appears to have had a beneficial effect on his reviving spirits. This pathetic letter was followed, in the course of two months, by a letter of a more lively cast, in which the reader will find some touches of his native humour, and a vein of pleasantry peculiar to himself.

## LETTER XXVI.

To Mrs COWPER, Park-Street, Grosvenor-Square.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

July 20, 1780.

Mr. Newton having desired me to be of the party, I am come to meet him. You see me sixteen years older, at the least, than when I saw you last; but the effects of time seem to have taken place rather on the outside of my head than within it. What was brown is become grey, but what was foolish remains foolish still. Green fruit must rot before it ripens, if the season is such as to afford it nothing but cold winds and dark clouds, that interrupt every ray of sunshine. My days steal away silently, and march on (as poor mad King Lear would have made his soldiers march) as if they were shod with felt; not so silently but that I hear them; yet were it not that I am always listening to their flight, having no infirmity that I had not when I was much younger, I should deceive myself with an imagination that I am still young.

I am fond of writing, as an amusement, but I do not always find it one. Being rather scantily furnished with subjects that are good for any thing, and corresponding only with those who have no relish for such as are good for nothing, I often find myself reduced

to the necessity, the disagreeable necessity, of writing about myself. This does not mend the matter much, for though in a description of my own condition, I discover abundant materials to employ my pen upon, yet as the task is not very agreeable to *me*, so I am sufficiently aware, that it is likely to prove irksome to others. A painter who should confine himself, in the exercise of his art, to the drawing of his own picture, must be a wonderful coxcomb, if he did not soon grow sick of his occupation, and be peculiarly fortunate, if he did not make others as sick as himself.

Remote as your dwelling is from the late scene of riot and confusion, I hope that though you could not but hear the report, you heard no more, and that the roarings of the mad multitude did not reach you. That was a day of terror to the innocent, and the present is a day of still greater terror to the guilty. The law was for a few moments like an arrow in the quiver, seemed to be of no use, and did no execution; now it is an arrow upon the string, and many who despised it lately, are trembling as they stand before the point of it.

I have talked more already than I have formerly done in three visits; you remember my taciturnity, never to be forgotten by those who knew me; not to depart entirely from what might be, for aught I know, the most shining part of my character. I here shut my mouth, make my bow, and return to Olney.

W. C.

The next is a little more serious than its predecessor, yet equally a proof that the affections of his heart, and the energy of his mind, were now happily restored.

#### LETTER XXVII.

To Mrs. COWPER, Park-Street, Grosvenor-Square.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

August 31, 1780.

I am obliged to you for your long letter, which did not seem so, and for your short one, which was more than I had reason to expect. Short as it was, it conveyed to me two interesting articles of intelligence. An account of your recovering from a fever, and of Lady Cowper's death. The latter was, I suppose, to be expected, for by what remembrance I have of her Ladyship, who was never much acquainted with her, she had reached those years that are always found upon the borders of another world. As for you, your time of life is comparatively of a youthful date. You may think of death as much as you please (you cannot think of it too much), but I hope you will live to think of it many years.

It costs me not much difficulty to suppose that my friends, who were already grown old, when I saw them last, are old still; but it costs me a good deal sometimes to think of those who were at that time young, as being older than they were. Not having been an eye witness of the change that time has made in them, and my former idea of them not being corrected by observation, it remains the same; my memory presents me with this image unimpaired, and while it retains the resemblance of what they were, forgets that by this time the picture may have lost much of its likeness, through the alteration that succeeding years have made in the original. I know not what impressions time may have made upon your person; for while his claws (as our Grannams called them) strike deep furrows in some faces, he seems to sheath them with much tenderness, as if fearful of doing injury to others. But though an enemy to the person, he is a friend to the mind, and you have found him so. Though even in this respect his treatment of us depends upon what he meets with at our hands; if we use him well, and listen to his admonitions, he is a friend indeed, but otherwise the worst of enemies, who takes from us daily something that we valued, and gives us nothing better in its stead. It is well with them, who, like you, can stand a tip-toe on the mountain top of human life, look down with pleasure upon the valley they have passed, and sometimes stretch their wings in joyful hope of a happy flight into eternity. Yet a little while and your hope will be accomplished.

When you can favour me with a little account of your own family without inconvenience, I shall be glad to receive it; for though separated from my kindred by little more than half a century of miles, I know as little of their concerns as if oceans and continents were interposed between us.

Yours, my dear cousin,

WM. COWPER.

The following letter to Mr. Hill contains a poem already printed in the works of Cowper, but the reader will probably be gratified in finding a little favourite piece of pleasantry introduced to him, as it was originally dispatched by the author for the amusement of a friend.

#### LETTER XXVIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

*Dec. 25, 1780.*

Weary with rather a long walk in the snow, I am not likely to write a very sprightly letter, or to produce any

thing that may cheer this gloomy season, unless I have recourse to my pocket-book, where, perhaps, I may find something to transcribe; something that was written before the Sun had taken leave of our hemisphere, and when I was less fatigued than I am at present.

Happy is the man who knows just so much of the law as to make himself a little merry now and then with the solemnity of juridical proceedings. I have heard of common law judgments before now, indeed have been present at the delivery of some, that, according to my poor apprehension, while they paid the utmost respect to the letter of a statute, have departed widely from the spirit of it, and, being governed entirely by the point of law, have left equity, reason, and common sense behind them at an infinite distance. You will judge whether the following report of a case, drawn up by myself, be not a proof and illustration of this satirical assertion.

NOSE, *Plaintiff*—EYES, *Defendants*.

1.

Between Nose and Eyes a sad contest arose,  
The Spectacles set them unhappily wrong,  
The point in dispute was, as all the world knows,  
To which the said Spectacles ought to belong.

2.

So the Tongue was the Lawyer, and argued the cause  
With a great deal of skill, and a wig full of learning,  
While chief Baron Ear, sat to balance the laws,  
So fam'd for his talents at nicely discerning.

3.

In behalf of the Nose, it will quickly appear,  
And your Lordship, he said, will undoubtedly find,  
That the Nose has had Spectacles always in wear,  
Which amounts to possession, time out of mind.

4.

Then holding the Spectacles up to the Court,  
Your Lordship observes they are made with a straddle  
As wide as the ridge of the Nose is, in short,  
Design'd to sit close to it, just like a saddle.

5.

Again would your Lordship a moment suppose,  
(Tis a case that has happen'd, and may be again)  
That the visage or countenance had not a Nose,  
Pray who would, or who could, wear Spectacles then?

6.

On the whole it appears, and my argument shows,  
 With a reasoning the Court will never condemn,  
 That the Spectacles plainly were made for the Nose,  
 And the Nose was as plainly intended for them.

7.

Then shifting his side, as a Lawyer knows how,  
 He pleaded again in behalf of the Eyes;  
 But what were his arguments few people know,  
 For the Court did not think they were equally wise.

8.

So his Lordship decreed, with a grave solemn tone,  
 Decisive and clear, without one *if* or *but*,  
 That whenever the Nose put his Spectacles on,  
 By day-light, or candle-light—Eyes should be shut!

Yours affectionately,

W. COWPER.

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LETTER XXIX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

*Feb. 15, 1781.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am glad you were pleased with my report of so extraordinary a case. If the thought of versifying the decisions of our Courts of Justice had struck me, while I had the honour to attend them, it would perhaps have been no difficult matter to have compiled a volume of such amusing and interesting precedents, which, if they wanted the eloquence of the Greek or Roman oratory, would have amply compensated that deficiency by the harmony of rhyme and metre.

Your account of my uncle and your mother gave me great pleasure. I have long been afraid to inquire after some in whose welfare I always feel myself interested, lest the question should produce a painful answer. Longevity is the lot of so few, and is so seldom rendered comfortable by the associations of good health and good spirits, that I could not very reasonably suppose either your relations or mine so happy in those respects as it seems they are. May they continue to enjoy those blessings so long as the date of life shall last. I do not think that in these coster-monger days, as I have a notion Falstaff calls them, an antediluvian age is at all a desirable thing; but to live comfortably, while we do live, is a great matter, and comprehends in it every thing that can be wished for on this side the curtain that hangs between Time and Eternity.



Farewell my better friend than any I have to boast of either among the Lords or Gentlemen of the House of Commons.

Yours ever,

WM. COWPER.

The reviving Poet, who had lived half a century with such a modest idea of his own extraordinary talents, that he had hitherto given no composition professedly to the public, now amused himself with preparations to appear as an author. But he hoped to conduct those preparations with a modest secrecy, and was astonished to find one of his intimate friends apprized of his design.

LETTER XXX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

*May 9, 1781.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I am in the press, and it is in vain to deny it. But how mysterious is the conveyance of intelligence from one end to the other of your great city!—Not many days since, except one man, and he but little taller than yourself, all London was ignorant of it; for I do not suppose that the public prints have yet announced the most agreeable tidings, the title-page, which is the basis of the advertisement, having so lately reached the publisher; and now it is known to you, who live at least two miles distant from my confidant upon the occasion.

My labours are principally the production of the last winter; all indeed, except a few of the minor pieces. When I can find no other occupation, I think; and when I think, I am very apt to do it in rhyme. Hence it comes to pass that the season of the year which generally pinches off the flowers of poetry, unfolds mine, such as they are, and crowns me with a winter garland. In this respect, therefore, I and my cotemporary Bards are by no means upon a par. They write when the delightful influences of fine weather, fine prospects, and a brisk motion of the animal spirits make poetry almost the language of nature: and I, when icicles depend from all the leaves of the Parnassian laurel, and when a reasonable man would as little expect to succeed in verse as to hear a black-bird whistle. This must be my apology to you for whatever want of fire and animation you may observe in what you will shortly have the perusal of. As to the public, if they like me not, there is no remedy. A friend will weigh and consider all disadvantages, and make as large allowances as an author can wish, and larger perhaps than he has any right to expect; but not so the world at large; whatever they do not like, they will not by any apology be

persuaded to forgive, and it would be in vain to tell *them* that I wrote my verses in January, for they would immediately reply, “why did not you write them in May?” A question that might puzzle a wiser head than we Poets are generally blessed with.

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I was informed by Mrs. Unwin that she strongly solicited her friend to devote his thoughts to Poetry, of considerable extent, on his recovery from his very long fit of mental dejection, suggesting to him, at the same time, the first subject of his song, “The progresses of Error!” which the reader will recollect as the second poem in his first volume. The time when that volume was completed, and the motives of its excellent author for giving it to the world, are clearly displayed in the following very interesting letter to his fair poetical cousin.

LETTER XXXI.  
To Mrs. COWPER.

*October 19, 1781.*

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Your fear lest I should think you unworthy of my correspondence on account of your delay to answer, may change sides now, and more properly belongs to me. It is long since I received your last, and yet I believe I can say truly that not a post has gone by me since the receipt of it, that has not reminded me of the debt I owe you for your obliging and unreserved communications, both in prose and verse, especially for the latter, because I consider them as marks of your peculiar confidence. The truth is, I have been such a verse-maker myself, and so busy in preparing a volume for the press, which I imagine will make its appearance in the course of the winter, that I hardly had leisure to listen to the calls of any other engagement. It is, however, finished, and gone to the printer's, and I have nothing now to do with it, but to correct the sheets as they are sent to me, and consign it over to the judgment of the public. It is a bold undertaking at this time of day, when so many writers of the greatest abilities have gone before, who seem to have anticipated every valuable subject, as well as all the graces of poetical embellishment, to step forth into the world in the character of a bard, especially when it is considered that luxury, idleness, and vice have debauched the public taste, and that nothing hardly is welcome, but childish fiction, or what has at least a tendency to excite a laugh. I thought, however, that I had stumbled upon some subjects that had never before been poetically treated, and upon some others, to which I imagined it would not be difficult to give an air

of novelty, by the manner of treating them. My sole drift is to be useful; a point which, however, I knew I should in vain aim at, unless I could be likewise entertaining. I have, therefore, fixed these two strings upon my bow, and by the help of both have done my best to send my arrow to the mark. My readers will hardly have begun to laugh, before they will be called upon to correct that levity, and peruse me with a more serious air. As to the effect, I leave it alone in his hands who can alone produce it; neither prose nor verse can reform the manners of a dissolute age, much less can they inspire a sense of religious obligation, unless assisted and made efficacious by the power who superintends the truth he has vouchsafed to impart.

You made my heart ache with a sympathetic sorrow, when you described the state of your mind on occasion of your late visit into Hartfordshire. Had I been previously informed of your journey before you made it, I should have been able to have foretold all your feelings with the most unerring certainty of prediction. You will never cease to feel upon that subject; but with your principles of resignation and acquiescence in the divine will, you will always feel as becomes a Christian. We are forbidden to murmur, but we are not forbidden to regret; and whom we loved tenderly while living, we may still pursue with an affectionate remembrance, without having any occasion to charge ourselves with rebellion against the Sovereignty that appointed a separation. A day is coming, when I am confident you will see and know that mercy to both parties was the principal agent in a scene, the recollection of which is still painful.

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Those who read what the Poet has here said of his intended publication, may perhaps think it strange that it was introduced to the world with a preface not written by himself, but by his friend, Mr. Newton. The circumstance is singular; but it arose from two amiable peculiarities in the character of Cowper, his extreme diffidence in regard to himself, and his kind eagerness to gratify the affectionate ambition of a friend, whom he tenderly esteemed! Mr. Newton has avowed the fervency of this ambition in a very ingenuous and manly manner; and they must have little candour, indeed, who are disposed to cavil at his alacrity in presenting himself to the public as the bosom friend of that incomparable author whom he had attended so faithfully in sickness and in sorrow!—I hope it is no sin to covet honour as the friend of Cowper, for if it is, I fear I may say but too truly in the words of Shakspeare,

“I am the most offending soul alive,”

Happy, however, if I may be able so to conduct and finish this biographical compilation, that those who knew and loved him best may be the most willing to applaud me as his friend; a title that my heart prefers to all other distinction!

The immediate success of his first volume was very far from being equal to its extraordinary merit. For some time it seemed to be neglected by the public, and although the first poem in the collection contains such a powerful image of its author, as might be thought sufficient not only to excite attention, but to secure attachment: for Cowper had undesignedly executed a masterly portrait of himself, in describing the true poet: I allude to the following verses in "Table Talk."

Nature, exerting an unwearied power,  
 Forms, opens, and gives scent to every flower;  
 Spreads the fresh verdure of the field, and leads  
 The dancing Naiads through the dewy meads:  
 She fills profuse ten thousand little throats  
 With music, modulating all their notes;  
 And charms the woodland scenes, and wilds unknown,  
 With artless airs, and concerts of her own:  
 But seldom (as if fearful of expense)  
 Vouchsafes to man a poet's just pretence—  
 Fervency, freedom, fluency of thought,  
 Harmony, strength, words exquisitely sought;  
 Fancy, that from the bow that spans the sky  
 Brings colours, dipt in Heaven, that never die;  
 A soul exalted above earth, a mind  
 Skill'd in the characters that form mankind;  
 And, as the Sun, in rising beauty drest,  
 Looks from the dappled orient to the West,  
 And marks, whatever clouds may interpose,  
 Ere yet his race begins, its glorious close;  
 An eye like his to catch the distant goal,  
 Or, ere the wheels of verse begin to roll,  
 Like his to shed illuminating rays  
 On every scene and subject it surveys:  
 Thus grac'd the man asserts a poet's name,  
 And the world cheerfully admits the claim.

The concluding lines may be considered as an omen of that celebrity, which such a writer, in the process of time, could not fail to obtain. Yet powerful as the claims of Cowper were to instant admiration and applause, it must be allowed (as an apology

for the inattention of the public) that he hazarded some sentiments in his first volume which were very likely to obstruct its immediate success in the world. I particularly allude to his bold eulogy on Whitfield, whom the dramatic satire of Foote, in his Comedy of the Minor, had taught the nation to deride as a mischievous fanatic. I allude also to a little acrimonious censure, in which he had indulged himself, against one of Whitfield's devout rivals, Mr. Charles Wesley, for allowing sacred music to form a part of his occupation on a Sunday evening. Such praise, and such reproof, bestowed on popular enthusiasts, might easily induce many careless readers, unacquainted with the singular mildness and purity of character that really belonged to the new Poet, to reject his book; without giving it a fair perusal, as the production of a recluse, inflamed with the fierce spirit of bigotry. No supposition could have been wider from the truth; for Cowper was indeed a rare example of true Christian benevolence: yet, as the best of men have their little occasional foibles, he allowed himself, sometimes with his pen, but never, I believe, in conversation, to speak rather acrimoniously of several pursuits and pastimes, that seem not to deserve any austerity of reproof. Of this he was aware himself, and confessed it, in the most ingenuous manner, on the following occasion. One of his intimate friends had written, in the first volume of his Poems, the following passage from the younger Pliny, as descriptive of the Book: "*Multa tenuiter, multa sublimiter, multa venuste, multa tenere, multa dulciter, multa cum bile.*" Many passages are delicate, many sublime, many beautiful, many tender, many sweet, many acrimonious.

Cowper was pleased with the application, and said, with the utmost candour and sincerity, "The latter part is very true indeed; yes! yes! there are "*multa cum bile,*" many acrimonious.

These little occasional touches of austerity would naturally arise in a life so sequestered; but how just a subject of surprize and admiration is it, to behold an author starting under such a load of disadvantages, and displaying, on the sudden, such a variety of excellence! For, neglected as it was for a few years, the first volume of Cowper exhibits such a diversity of poetical powers, as have been given very rarely indeed to any individual of the modern or of the ancient world. He is not only great in passages of pathos and sublimity, but he is equally admirable in wit and humour. After descanting most copiously on sacred subjects, with the animation of a Prophet, and the simplicity of an Apostle, he paints the ludicrous characters of common life with the comic force of Moliere; particularly in his Poem on Conversation, and his exquisite portrait of a fretful temper: a piece of moral painting so highly



finished, and so happily calculated to promote good humour, that a transcript of the verses shall close the first part of these Memoirs.

Some fretful tempers wince at every touch;  
You always do too little or too much:  
You speak with life, in hopes to entertain;  
Your elevated voice goes through the brain:  
You fall at once into a lower key;  
That's worse :—the drone-pipe of an humble Bee!  
The Southern sash admits too strong a light;  
You rise and drop the curtain :—now its night.  
He shakes with cold;—you stir the fire, and strive  
To make a blaze :—that's roasting him alive.  
Serve him with ven'son, and he chooses Fish;  
With soal—that's just the sort he would not wish.  
He takes what he at first profess'd to loath;  
And in due time feeds heartily on both :  
Yet, still o'erclouded with a constant frown;  
He does not swallow, but he gulps it down.  
Your hope to please him vain on every plan,  
Himself should work that wonder, if he can.  
Alas ! his efforts double his distress;  
He likes yours little, and his own still less.  
Thus always teasing others, always teaz'd,  
His only pleasure is—to be displeas'd.

END OF THE FIRST PART.

OF LONDON, FROM THE YEAR 1660 TO 1703.

THE HISTORY OF THE

ROYAL SOCIETY

OF LONDON, FROM THE YEAR 1660 TO 1703.

THE  
LIFE OF COWPER.

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PART THE SECOND.

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Αντὶ τοῦ ἰστορικοῦ αἰδίου.

A NEW æra opens in the history of the Poet, from an incident that gave fresh ardour and vivacity to his fertile imagination. In September, 1781, he happened to form an acquaintance with a lady, highly accomplished herself, and singularly happy in animating and directing the fancy of her poetical friends. The world will perfectly agree with me in this eulogy, when I add, that to this lady we are primarily indebted for the Poem of the Task, for the Ballad of John Gilpin, and for the Translation of Homer. But in my lively sense of her merit, I am almost forgetting my immediate duty, as the Biographer of the Poet, to introduce her circumstantially to the acquaintance of my Reader.

A lady, whose name was Jones, was one of the few neighbours admitted in the residence of the retired Poet. She was the wife of a Clergyman, who resided at the village of Clifton, within a mile of Olney. Her sister, the widow of Sir Robert Austen, Baronet, came to pass some time with her in the Autumn of 1781; and as the two ladies chanced to call at a shop in Olney, opposite to the house of Mrs. Unwin, Cowper observed them from his window.—Although naturally shy, and now rendered more so by his very long illness, he was so struck with the appearance of the stranger, that on hearing she was sister to Mrs. Jones, he requested Mrs. Unwin to invite them to tea. So strong was his reluctance to admit the company of strangers, that after he had occasioned this invitation, he was for a long time unwilling to join the little party; but having forced himself at last to engage in conversation with Lady Austen, he was so reanimated by her uncommon colloquial talents, that he attended the Ladies on their return to Clifton, and from that time continued to cultivate the regard of his new acquaintance with such assiduous attention, that she soon received from him the familiar and endearing title of Sister Ann.

The great and happy influence which an incident, that seems at first sight so trivial, produced very rapidly on the imagination of Cowper, will best appear from the following Epistle, which, soon after Lady Austen's return to London for the winter, the Poet addressed to her, on the 17th of December, 1781.

Dear Anna—Between friend and friend,  
 Prose answers every common end ;  
 Serves, in a plain, and homely way,  
 T' express th' occurrence of the day ;  
 Our health, the weather, and the news ;  
 What walks we take, what books we choose ;  
 And all the floating thoughts, we find  
 Upon the surface of the mind.

But when a Poet takes the pen,  
 Far more alive than other men,  
 He feels a gentle tingling come  
 Down to his finger and his thumb,  
 Deriv'd from nature's noblest part,  
 The centre of a glowing heart !  
 And this is what the world, who knows  
 No flights above the pitch of prose,  
 His more sublime vagaries slighting,  
 Denominates an itch for writing.  
 No wonder I, who scribble rhyme,  
 To catch the triflers of the time,  
 And tell them truths divine and clear,  
 Which, couch'd in prose, they will not hear ;  
 Who labour hard to allure, and draw  
 The loiterers I never saw,  
 Should feel that itching, and that tingling,  
 With all my purpose intermingling,  
 To your intrinsic merit true,  
 When call'd to address myself to you.

Mysterious are his ways, whose power  
 Brings forth that unexpected hour,  
 When minds that never met before,  
 Shall meet, unite, and part no more :  
 It is th' allotment of the skies,  
 The Hand of the Supremely Wise,  
 That guides and governs our affections,  
 And plans and orders our connections ;

Directs us in our distant road,  
 And marks the bounds of our abode.  
 Thus we were settled when you found us,  
 Peasants and children all around us,  
 Not dreaming of so dear a friend,  
 Deep in the abyss of Silver-End.\*  
 Thus Martha, even against her will,  
 Perch'd on the top of yonder hill;  
 And you, though you must needs prefer  
 The fairer scenes of sweet Sancerre,†  
 Are come from distant Loire, to choose  
 A cottage on the Banks of Ouse.  
 This page of Providence quite new,  
 And now just opening to our view,  
 Employs our present thoughts and pains,  
 To guess, and spell, what it contains:  
 But day by day, and year by year,  
 Will make the dark ænigma clear;  
 And furnish us, perhaps, at last,  
 Like other scenes already past,  
 With proof, that we and our affairs  
 Are part of a Jehovah's cares:  
 For God unfolds, by slow degrees,  
 The purport of his deep decrees;  
 Sheds every hour a clearer light  
 In aid of our defective sight;  
 And spreads at length, before the soul,  
 A beautiful and perfect whole,  
 Which busy man's inventive brain  
 Toils to anticipate in vain.

Say, Anna, had you never known  
 The beauties of a Rose full blown,  
 Could you, though luminous your eye,  
 By looking on the bud, descry,  
 Or guess, with a prophetic power,  
 The future splendour of the flower?  
 Just so th' Omnipotent, who turns  
 The system of a world's concerns,  
 From mere minutix can educe  
 Events of most important use,

\* An obscure part of Olney, adjoining to the residence of Cowper, which faced the market-place.

† Lady Austen's residence in France.



And bid a dawning sky display  
 The blaze of a meridian day.  
 The works of man tend, one and all,  
 As needs they must, from great to small;  
 And vanity absorbs at length  
 The monuments of human strength.  
 But who can tell how vast the plan  
 Which this day's incident began?  
 Too small, perhaps, the slight occasion  
 For our dim-sighted observation;  
 It pass'd unnotic'd, as the bird  
 That cleaves the yielding air unheard,  
 And yet may prove, when understood,  
 An harbinger of endless good.

Not that I deem, or mean to call,  
 Friendship a blessing cheap or small;  
 But merely to remark, that ours,  
 Like some of nature's sweetest flowers,  
 Rose from a seed of tiny size,  
 That seem'd to promise no such prize:  
 A transient visit intervening,  
 And made almost without a meaning,  
 (Hardly the effect of inclination,  
 Much less of pleasing expectation!)  
 Produc'd a friendship, then begun,  
 That has cemented us in one;  
 And plac'd it in our power to prove,  
 By long fidelity and love,  
 That Solomon has wisely spoken:  
 "A three-fold cord is not soon broken."

In this interesting Poem the Author expresses a lively and devout presage of the superior productions that were to arise, in the process of time, from a friendship so unexpected, and so pleasing; but he does not seem to have been aware, in the slightest degree, of the evident dangers that must naturally attend an intimacy so very close, yet perfectly innocent, between a Poet and two Ladies, who, with very different mental powers, had each reason to flatter herself that she could agreeably promote the studies, and animate the fancy of this fascinating Bard.

Genius of the most exquisite kind is sometimes, and perhaps generally, so modest and diffident, as to require continual sollicitation and encouragement from the voice of sympathy and friend-

ship, to lead it into permanent and successful exertion. Such was the genius of Cowper; and he therefore considered the cheerful and animating society of his new accomplished friend, as a blessing conferred on him by the signal favour of Providence. She returned the following summer to the house of her sister, situated on the brow of a hill, the foot of which is washed by the River Ouse, as it flows between Clifton and Olney. Her benevolent ingenuity was exerted to guard the spirits of Cowper from sinking again into that hypochondriacal dejection to which, even in her company, he still sometimes discovered an alarming tendency. To promote his occupation and amusement, she furnished him with a small portable printing-press, and he gratefully sent her the following verses, printed by himself, and enclosed in a billet, that alludes to the occasion on which they were composed—a very unseasonable flood, that interrupted the communication between Clifton and Olney.

To watch the storms, and hear the sky  
 Give all our Almanacks the lie;  
 To shake with cold, and see the plains  
 In Autumn drown'd with Wintry rains;  
 'Tis thus I spend my moments here,  
 And wish myself a Dutch Mynheer;  
 I then should have no need of wit  
 For lumpish Hollander unfit!  
 Nor should I then repine at mud,  
 Or meadows delug'd by a flood;  
 But in a bog live well content,  
 And find it just my element;  
 Should be a clod, and not a man,  
 Nor wish in vain for Sister Ann,  
 With charitable aid to drag  
 My mind out of its proper quag;  
 Should have the genius of a boor,  
 And no ambition to have more.

MY DEAR SISTER,

You see my beginning—I do not know but in time I may proceed even to the printing of halfpenny Ballads—Excuse the coarseness of my paper—I wasted such a quantity before I could accomplish any thing legible, that I could not afford finer. I intend to employ an ingenious mechanic of the town to make me a longer case: for you may observe, that my lines turn up their tails like Dutch mastiffs, so difficult do I find it to make the two halves exactly coincide with each other.

We wait with impatience for the departure of this unseasonable flood—We think of you, and talk of you, but we can do no more, till the waters shall subside. I do not think our correspondence should drop because we are within a mile of each other. It is but an imaginary approximation, the flood having in reality as effectually parted us, as if the British Channel rolled between us.

Yours, my dear Sister, with Mrs. Unwin's best love.

WM. COWPER.

*August 12, 1782.*

A flood that precluded him from the conversation of such an enlivening friend was to Cowper a serious evil; but he was happily relieved from the apprehension of such disappointment in future, by seeing the friend so pleasing and so useful to him very comfortably settled as his next door neighbour.

Lady Austen became a tenant of the Parsonage in Olney; when Mr. Newton occupied that Parsonage he had opened a door in the garden wall that admitted him, in the most commodious manner, to visit the sequestered Poet, who resided in the next house. Lady Austen had the advantage of this easy intercourse, and so captivating was her society, both to Cowper and to Mrs. Unwin, that these intimate neighbours might be almost said to make one family, as it became their custom to dine always together, alternately, in the houses of the two ladies.

The musical talents of Lady Austen induced Cowper to write a few songs of peculiar sweetness and pathos, to suit particular airs that she was accustomed to play on the Harpsichord. I insert three of these as proofs, that even in his hours of social amusement, the Poet loved to dwell on ideas of tender devotion and pathetic solemnity.

#### SONG

*Written in the Summer of 1783, at the request of Lady Austen,*

AIR—"My fond Shepherds of late," &c.

No longer I follow a sound;  
 No longer a dream I pursue:  
 O Happiness, not to be found,  
 Unattainable treasure, adieu!

I have sought thee in splendour and dress;  
 In the regions of pleasure and taste:  
 I have sought thee, and seem'd to possess,  
 But have prov'd thee a vision at last.

An humble ambition and hope  
 The voice of true wisdom inspires;  
 'Tis sufficient if Peace be the scope,  
 And the summit of all our desires.

Peace may be the lot of the mind,  
 That seeks it in meekness and love;  
 But rapture and bliss are confin'd  
 To the glorified Spirits above.

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SONG 2:

AIR—"The Lass of Pattie's Mill."

When all within is peace,  
 How Nature seems to smile!  
 Delights that never cease,  
 The livelong day beguile.  
 From morn to dewy eve,  
 With open hand she showers  
 Fresh blessings, to deceive  
 And soothe the silent hours.

It is content of heart  
 Gives Nature power to please;  
 The mind that feels no smart  
 Enlivens all it sees;  
 Can make a wint'ry sky  
 Seem bright as smiling May,  
 And evening's closing eye  
 As peep of early day.

The vast majestic globe,  
 So beautecusly arrayed  
 In Nature's various robe,  
 With wond'rous skill display'd,  
 Is, to a mourner's heart,  
 A dreary wild at best:  
 It flutters to depart,  
 And longs to be at rest.

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I add the following Song (adapted to the March in Scipio) for two reasons; because it is pleasing to promote the celebrity of a

brave man, calamitously cut off in his career of honour, and because the Song was a favourite production of the Poet's; so much so, that, in a season of depressive illness, he amused himself by translating it into Latin verse.

## SONG 3.

*On the Loss of the Royal George.*

Toll for the brave!  
 The brave! that are no more!  
 All sunk beneath the wave,  
 Fast by their native shore.

Eight hundred of the brave,  
 Whose courage well was tried,  
 Had made the vessel heel,  
 And laid her on her side.

A land-breeze shook the shrouds,  
 And she was overset;  
 Down went the Royal George,  
 With all her crew complete.

Toll for the brave!  
 Brave Kempenfelt is gone:  
 His last sea-fight is fought;  
 His work of glory done.

It was not in the battle;  
 No tempest gave the shock:  
 She sprang no fatal leak;  
 She ran upon no rock.

His sword was in its sheath,  
 His fingers held the pen,  
 When Kempenfelt went down,  
 With twice four hundred men.

Weigh the vessel up,  
 Once dreaded by our foes!  
 And mingle with our cup  
 The tear that England owes.



Her timbers yet are sound,  
 And she may float again,  
 Full charg'd with England's thunder,  
 And plough the distant main.

But Kempenfelt is gone,  
 His victories are o'er;  
 And he and his eight hundred  
 Shall plough the wave no more.

Let the reader who wishes to impress on his mind a just idea of the variety and extent of Cowper's poetical powers, contrast this heroic Ballad, of exquisite pathos, with his diverting history of John Gilpin!

That admirable and highly popular piece of pleasantry was composed at the period of which I am now speaking (1783). An elegant and judicious writer, who has recently favoured the public with three interesting volumes relating to the early poets of our country, conjectures, that a poem, written by the celebrated Sir Thomas More in his youth, (the merry jest of the Sergeant and Frere), may have suggested to Cowper his tale of John Gilpin: but that fascinating Ballad had a different origin; and it is a very remarkable fact, that, full of gaiety and humour, as this favourite of the public has abundantly proved itself to be, it was really composed at a time when the spirit of the Poet, as he informed me himself, was very deeply tinged with his depressive malady. It happened one afternoon, in those years when his accomplished friend, Lady Austen, made a part of his little evening circle, that she observed him sinking into increasing dejection: it was her custom, on these occasions, to try all the resources of her sprightly powers for his immediate relief. She told him the story of John Gilpin (which had been treasured in her memory from her childhood) to dissipate the gloom of the passing hour. Its effect on the fancy of Cowper had the air of enchantment: he informed her the next morning, that convulsions of laughter, brought on by his recollection of her story, had kept him waking during the greatest part of the night, and that he had turned it into a Ballad. So arose the pleasant Poem of John Gilpin. It was eagerly copied, and finding its way rapidly to the newspapers, it was seized by the lively spirit of Henderson, the Comedian, a native of Newport-Pagnell, and a man, like the Yorick described by Shakspeare, "of infinite jest, and most excellent fancy;" it was seized by Henderson as a proper subject for the display of his own comic powers; and by re-

citing it in his public readings, he gave uncommon celebrity to the Ballad, before the public suspected to what Poet they were indebted for the sudden burst of ludicrous amusement. Many readers were astonished when the Poem made its first authentic appearance in the second volume of Cowper. In some letters of the Poet to Mr. Hill, which did not reach me till my work was nearly finished, I find an account of John Gilpin's first introduction to the world, and a circumstance relating to the first volume of Cowper's Poems, which may render the following selection from this correspondence peculiarly interesting.

## LETTER XXXII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

*Feb. 13 & 20, 1783.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

In writing to you I never want a subject. Self is always at hand, and Self, with its concerns, is always interesting to a friend.

You may think, perhaps, that having commenced Poet by profession, I am always writing verses. Not so—I have written nothing, at least finished nothing, since I published—except a certain facetious history of John Gilpin, which Mr. Unwin would send to the Public Advertiser; perhaps you might read it without suspecting the Author.

My Book procures me favours, which my modesty will not permit me to specify, except one, which, modest as I am, I cannot suppress, a very handsome Letter from Dr. Franklin, at Passy—These fruits it has brought me.

I have been refreshing myself with a walk in the garden, where I find that January (who, according to Chaucer, was the husband of May) being dead, February has married the widow.

Yours, &amp;c. W. C.

## LETTER XXXIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

*Olney, Feb. 20, 1783.*

Suspecting that I should not have hinted at Dr. Franklin's encomium under any other influence than that of vanity, I was several times on the point of burning my letter for that very reason. But not having time to write another by the same post, and believing that you would have the grace to pardon a little self-complacency in an Author on so trying an occasion, I let it pass. One sin naturally leads to another and a greater, and thus it hap-

pens now: for I have no way to gratify your curiosity, but by transcribing the letter in question. It is addressed, by the way, not to me, but to an acquaintance of mine, who had transmitted the volume to him without my knowledge.

“SIR,

*Passy, May 8, 1782.*

I received the letter you did me the honour of writing to me, and am much obliged by your kind present of a book. The relish for reading of Poetry had long since left me; but there is something so new in the manner, so easy and yet so correct in the language, so clear in the expression, yet concise, and so just in the sentiments, that I have read the whole with great pleasure, and some of the pieces more than once. I beg you to accept my thankful acknowledgments, and to present my respects to the author.

Your most obedient, humble servant,

B. FRANKLIN.”

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LETTER XXXIV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Great revolutions happen in this Ant's nest of ours. One Emmet of illustrious character and great abilities pushes out another; parties are formed; they range themselves in formidable opposition; they threaten each other's ruin; they cross over, and are mingled together; and, like the corruscations of the Northern Aurora, amuse the spectator, at the same time that, by some, they are supposed to be forerunners of a general dissolution.

There are political earthquakes as well as natural ones; the former less shocking to the eye, but not always less fatal in their influence than the latter. The image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream was made up of heterogeneous and incompatible materials, and accordingly broken. Whatever is so formed must expect a like catastrophe.

I have an etching of the late Chancellor hanging over the parlour chimney. I often contemplate it, and call to mind the day when I was intimate with the original. It is very like him, but he is disguised by his hat, which, though fashionable, is awkward; by his great wig, the tie of which is hardly discernable in profile; and by his band and gown, which give him an appearance clumsily sacerdotal. Our friendship is dead and buried; yours is the only surviving one of all with which I was once honoured. Adieu.

## LETTER XXXV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

*May 26, 1783.*

I feel for my uncle, and do not wonder that his loss afflicts him. A connection that has subsisted so many years could not be rent asunder without great pain to the survivor. I hope, however, and doubt not but when he has had a little more time for recollection, he will find that consolation in his own family which is not the lot of every father to be blessed with. It seldom happens that married persons live together so long or so happily: but this, which one feels oneself ready to suggest as matter of alleviation, is the very circumstance that aggravates his distress; therefore he misses her the more, and feels that he can but ill spare her. It is, however, a necessary tax, which all who live long must pay for their longevity, to lose many whom they would be glad to detain (perhaps those in whom all their happiness is centered), and to see them step into the grave before them. In one respect at least this is a merciful appointment. When life has lost that to which it owed its principal relish, we may ourselves the more cheerfully resign it. I beg you would present him with my most affectionate remembrance, and tell him, if you think fit, how much I wish that the evening of his long day may be serene and happy.

## LETTER XXXVI.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

*October 20, 1783.*

I should not have been thus long silent, had I known with certainty where a letter of mine might find you. Your summer excursions, however, are now at an end, and addressing a line to you in the centre of the busy scene in which you spend your winter, I am pretty sure of my mark.

I see the winter approaching without much concern, though a passionate lover of fine weather, and the pleasant scenes of summer; but the long evenings have their comforts too, and there is hardly to be found upon the earth, I suppose, so snug a creature as an Englishman by his fire-side in the winter. I mean, however, an Englishman that lives in the country, for in London it is not very easy to avoid intrusion. I have two ladies to read to—sometimes more, but never less. At present we are circumnavigating the globe, and I find the old story with which I amused myself some years since, through the great felicity of a memory

not very retentive, almost new. I am, however, sadly at a loss for Cook's Voyage: Can you send it? I shall be glad of Forster's too. These together will make the winter pass merrily, and you will much oblige me.

The last letter contains a slight sketch of those happy winter evenings which the Poet has painted so exquisitely in verse. The two ladies whom he mentions as his constant auditors were Mrs. Unwin and Lady Austen. The public, already indebted to the friendly and cheerful spirit of the latter for the pleasant Ballad of John Gilpin, had soon to thank her inspiring benevolence for a work of superior dignity, the very master-piece of Cowper's unbounded imagination!

This lady happened, as an admirer of Milton, to be partial to blank verse, and often solicited her poetical friend to try his powers in that species of composition. After repeated solicitation, he promised her, if she would furnish the subject, to comply with her request.—“O,” she replied, “you can never be in want of a subject—you can write upon any—write upon this sofa!” The Poet obeyed her command, and from the lively repartee of familiar conversation arose a Poem of many thousand verses, unexampled perhaps both in its origin and its excellence! A Poem of such infinite variety, that it seems to include every subject, and every style, without any dissonance or disorder; and to have flowed, without effort, from inspired philanthropy, eager to impress upon the hearts of all readers whatever may lead them most happily to the full enjoyment of human life, and to the final attainment of Heaven.

The Task appears to have been composed in the winter of 1784. A circumstance the more remarkable, as winter was, in general, particularly unfavourable to the health of the Poet. In the commencement of the Poem he marks both the season and the year, in the tender address to his companion.

“Whose arm this twentieth winter I perceive  
“Fast lock'd in mine.”

If such can be the proper date of this most interesting Poem, it must have been written with inconceivable rapidity, for it was certainly finished very early in November. This appears from the following passage in a letter of the Poet's to his friend Mr. Bull, in which he not only mentions the completion of his great work, but gives a particular account of his next production.

“The Task, as you know, is gone to the press: since it went I



have been employed in writing another Poem, which I am now transcribing, and which, in a short time, I design shall follow. It is entitled *Tirocinium*, or a Review of Schools: the business and purpose of it are to censure the want of discipline, and the scandalous inattention to morals, that obtain in them; especially in the largest; and to recommend private tuition as a mode of education preferable on all accounts; to call upon fathers to become tutors of their own sons, where that is practicable; to take home to them a domestic tutor, where it is not; and if neither can be done, to place them under the care of such a man as he to whom I am writing; some rural Parson, whose attention is limited to a few."

The date of this letter (Nov. 8, 1784), and the information it contains, induce me to imagine that the *Task* was really begun before the winter of 1784, and that the passage which I have cited, as marking the æra of its composition, was added in the course of a revisal.

The following passages from Cowper's letters to his last mentioned correspondent confirm this conjecture.

*August 3, 1783*—"Your sea-side situation, your beautiful prospects, your fine rides, and the sight of the palaces, which you have seen, we have not envied you; but are glad that you have enjoyed them. Why should we envy any man? Is not our greenhouse a cabinet of perfumes? It is at this moment fronted with carnations and balsams, with mignonette and roses, with jessamine and woodbine, and wants nothing but your pipe to make it truly Arabian;—a wilderness of sweets! The Sofa is ended, but not finished; a paradox which your natural acumen, sharpened by habits of logical attention, will enable you to reconcile in a moment. Do not imagine, however, that I lounge over it—on the contrary, I find it severe exercise to mould and fashion it to my mind!"

*February 22, 1784*—"I congratulate you on the thaw—I suppose it is an universal blessing, and probably felt all over Europe. I myself am the better for it, who wanted nothing that might make the frost supportable: what reason, therefore, have they to rejoice who, being in want of all things, were exposed to its utmost rigour?—The ice in my ink, however, is not yet dissolved—It was long before the frost seized it, but at last it prevailed—The Sofa has consequently received little or no addition since—It consists at present of four Books, and part of a fifth: when the sixth is finished, the work is accomplished; but if I may judge by my present inability, that period is at a considerable distance."

The year 1784 was a memorable period in the life of the Poet, not only as it witnessed the completion of one extensive work,

and the commencement of another, (his Translation of Homer) but as it terminated his intercourse with that highly pleasing and valuable friend whose alacrity of attention and advice had induced him to engage in both.

Delightful and advantageous as his friendship with Lady Austen had proved, he now began to feel that it grew impossible to preserve that triple cord, which his own pure heart had led him to suppose not speedily to be broken. Mrs. Unwin, though by no means destitute of mental accomplishments, was eclipsed by the brilliancy of the Poet's new friend, and naturally became uneasy under the apprehension of being so; for, to a woman of sensibility, what evil can be more afflicting than the fear of losing all mental influence over a man of genius and virtue whom she has been long accustomed to inspire and to guide?

Cowper perceived the painful necessity of sacrificing a great portion of his present gratifications. He felt that he must relinquish that ancient friend, whom he regarded as a venerable parent, or the new associate, whom he idolized as a sister of a heart and mind peculiarly congenial to his own. His gratitude for past services of unexampled magnitude and weight would not allow him to hesitate, and, with a resolution and delicacy that do the highest honour to his feelings, he wrote a farewell letter to Lady Austen, explaining and lamenting the circumstances that forced him to renounce the society of a friend, whose enchanting talents and kindness had proved so agreeably instrumental to the revival of his spirits, and to the exercise of his fancy.

The letters addressed to Mr. Hill at this period express, in a most pleasing manner, the sensibility of Cowper.

## LETTER XXXVII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

*Sept. 11, 1784.*

I have never seen Dr. Cotton's book, concerning which your sisters question me; nor did I know, 'till you mentioned it, that he had written any thing newer than his *Visions*: I have no doubt that it is so far worthy of him as to be pious and sensible, and I believe no man living is better qualified to write on such subjects as his title seems to announce. Some years have passed since I heard from him, and, considering his great age, it is probable that I shall hear from him no more; but I shall always respect him. He is truly a philosopher, according to my judgment of the character; every tittle of his knowledge in natural subjects being connected, in his mind, with the firm belief of an Omnipotent Agent.

Yours, &amp;c. W. C.

## LETTER XXXVIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

To condole with you on the death of a mother aged eighty-seven would be absurd—Rather, therefore, as is reasonable, I congratulate you on the almost singular felicity of having enjoyed the company of so amiable and so near a relation so long. Your lot and mine, in this respect, have been very different, as, indeed, in almost every other. Your mother lived to see you rise, at least to see you comfortably established in the world. Mine dying when I was six years old, did not live to see me sink in it. You may remember, with pleasure, while you live, a blessing vouchsafed to you so long, and I, while I live, must regret a comfort of which I was deprived so early. I can truly say that not a week passes, (perhaps I might with equal veracity say a day) in which I do not think of her. Such was the impression her tenderness made upon me, though the opportunity she had for showing it was so short. But the ways of God are equal—and when I reflect on the pangs she would have suffered had she been a witness of all mine, I see more cause to rejoice than to mourn that she was hidden in the grave so soon.

We have, as you say, lost a lively and sensible neighbour in Lady Austen; but we have been long accustomed to a state of retirement, within one degree of solitude, and being naturally lovers of still life, can relapse into our former duality without being unhappy at the change. To me, indeed, a third is not necessary, while I can have the companion I have had these twenty years.

I am gone to the press again; a volume of mine will greet your hands some time either in the course of the winter or early in the spring. You will find it, perhaps, on the whole, more entertaining than the former, as it treats of a greater variety of subjects, and those, at least the most, of a sublunary kind. It will consist of a Poem in six books, called the Task. To which will be added another, which I finished yesterday, called, I believe, Tirocinium, on the subject of Education.

You perceive that I have taken your advice, and given the pen no rest.

LETTER XXXIX.  
To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

June 25, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I write in a nook that I call my *Boudoir*. It is a summer-house not much bigger than a sedan-chair, the door of which opens into the garden that is now crowded with pinks, roses and honey-suckles, and the window into my neighbour's orchard. It formerly served an apothecary, now dead, as a smoking-room, and under my feet is a trap-door, which once covered a hole in the ground, where he kept his bottles. At present, however, it is dedicated to sublimer uses. Having lined it with garden mats, and furnished it with a table and two chairs, here I write all that I write in summer time, whether to my friends, or to the public. It is secure from all noise, and a refuge from all intrusion; for intruders sometimes trouble me in the winter evenings at Olney. But thanks to my *Boudoir*, I can now hide myself from them. A Poet's retreat is sacred: they acknowledge the truth of that proposition, and never presume to violate it.

The last sentence puts me in mind to tell you, that I have ordered my volume to your door. My bookseller is the most dilatory of all his fraternity, or you would have received it long since: it is more than a month since I returned him the last proof, and consequently since the printing was finished. I sent him the manuscript at the beginning of last November, that he might publish while the town is full, and he will hit the exact moment when it is entirely empty. Patience you will perceive is in no situation exempted from the severest trials; a remark that may serve to comfort you under the numberless trials of your own.

W. C.

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His second volume, of whose delay in the press he speaks so feelingly, was published in the summer of 1785. It not only raised him to the summit of poetical reputation, but obtained for him a blessing infinitely dearer to his affectionate heart, another female friend, and lively associate, now providentially led to contribute to his comfort, when the advanced age and infirmities of Mrs. Unwin made such an acquisition of new, or rather revived friendship, a matter of infinite importance to the tranquility and welfare of the sequestered Poet.

The Lady to whom I allude had the advantage of being nearly related to Cowper. Their intercourse had been frequent, and



endeared by reciprocal esteem in their early years; but the whirlwinds of life had driven them far from the sight of each other. During the Poet's long retirement his fair cousin had passed some years with her husband abroad, and others, after her return, in a variety of mournful duties. She was at this time a widow, and her indelible regard for her poetical relation, being agreeably inspirited by the publication of his recent works, she wrote to him, on that occasion, a very kind letter.

It gave rise to many from him, which I am particularly happy in being enabled to make a part of this work, because they give a minute account of their admirable author, at a very interesting period of his life; and because I persuade myself they will reflect peculiar honour on my departed friend in various points of view, and lead the public to join with me in thinking that his letters are rivals to his Poems, in the rare excellence of representing life and nature with graceful and endearing fidelity.

#### LETTER XL.

To Lady HESKETH, New Norfolk Street, Grosvenor-Square,  
*October 12, 1785.*

MY DEAR COUSIN,

It is no new thing with you to give pleasure, but I will venture to say that you do not often give more than you gave me this morning. When I came down to breakfast, and found upon the table a letter franked by my uncle, and when opening that frank I found that it contained a letter from you, I said within myself, this is just as it should be; we are all young again; and the days that I thought I should see no more, are actually returned. You perceive therefore that you judged well when you conjectured that a line from you would not be disagreeable to me. It could not be otherwise than, as in fact it proved, a most agreeable surprize, for I can truly boast of an affection for you that neither years nor interrupted intercourse have at all abated. I need only recollect how much I valued you once, and with how much cause, immediately to feel a revival of the same value; if that can be said to revive, which at the most has only been dormant for want of employment. But I slander it when I say that it has slept. A thousand times have I recollected a thousand scenes in which our two selves have formed the whole of the drama, with the greatest pleasure; at times too when I had no reason to suppose that I should ever hear from you again. I have laughed with you at the Arabian Nights Entertainment, which afforded us, as you well know, a fund of merriment that deserves never to be forgot. I have walked with you to Nettle Abbey, and have scrambled with



you over hedges in every direction, and many other feats we have performed together, upon the field of my remembrance, and all within these few years, should I say within this twelvemonth I should not transgress the truth. The hours that I have spent with you were among the pleasantest of my former days, and are therefore chronicled in my mind so deeply as to fear no erasure. Neither do I forget my poor friend Sir Thomas: I should remember him indeed at any rate on account of his personal kindnesses to myself, but the last testimony that he gave of his regard for you, endears him to me still more. With his uncommon understanding (for with many peculiarities he had more sense than any of his acquaintance) and with his generous sensibilities, it was hardly possible that he should not distinguish you as he has done: as it was the last, so it was the best proof that he could give of a judgment that never deceived him, when he would allow himself leisure to consult it.

You say that you have often heard of me: that puzzles me. I cannot imagine from what quarter; but it is no matter. I must tell you, however, my Cousin, that your information has been a little defective. That I am happy in my situation is true: I live and have lived these twenty years with Mrs. Unwin, to whose affectionate care of me during the far greater part of that time, it is, under Providence, owing that I live at all. But I do not account myself happy in having been for thirteen of those years in a state of mind that has made all that care and attention necessary: an attention and a care that have injured her health, and which, had she not been uncommonly supported, must have brought her to the grave. But I will pass to another subject; it would be cruel to particularize only to give pain; neither would I by any means give a sable hue to the first letter of a correspondence so unexpectedly renewed.

I am delighted with what you tell me of my uncle's good health; to enjoy any measure of cheerfulness at so late a day is much, but to have that late day enlivened with the vivacity of youth, is much more, and in these postdiluvian times a rarity indeed. Happy, for the most part, are parents who have daughters. Daughters are not apt to outlive their natural affections, which a son has generally survived even before his boyish years are expired. I rejoice particularly in my uncle's felicity, who has three female descendants from his little person, who leave him nothing to wish for upon that head.

My dear Cousin, dejection of spirits, which I suppose may have prevented many a man from becoming an Author, made me one. I find constant employment necessary, and therefore take care to be constantly employed. Manual occupations do not en-

gage the mind sufficiently, as I know by experience, having tried many: but composition, especially of verse, absorbs it wholly. I write therefore generally three hours in a morning, and in an evening I transcribe. I read also, but less than I write, for I must have bodily exercise, and therefore never pass a day without it.

You ask me where I have been this summer. I answer at Olney. Should you ask me where I spent the last seventeen summers, I should still answer at Olney. Ay, and the winters also. I have seldom left it, and except when I attended my brother in his last illness, never I believe a fortnight together.

Adieu, my beloved Cousin: I shall not always be thus nimble in reply, but shall always have great pleasure in answering you when I can.

Yours, my Friend and Cousin,

WM. COWPER.

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LETTER XLI.

To Lady HESKETH.

*Olney, Nov. 9, 1785,*

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Whose last most affectionate letter has run in my head ever since I received it, and which I now sit down to answer two days sooner than the post will serve me. I thank you for it, and with a warmth for which I am sure you will give me credit, though I do not spend many words in describing it. I do not seek *new* friends, not being altogether sure that I should find them, but have unspeakable pleasure in being still beloved by an old one. I hope that now our correspondence has suffered its last interruption, and that we shall go down together to the grave chatting and chirping as merrily as such a scene of things as this will permit.

I am happy that my Poems have pleased you. My volume has afforded me no such pleasure at any time, either while I was writing it, or since its publication, as I have derived from yours and my uncle's opinion of it. I make certain allowances for partiality, and for that peculiar quickness of taste with which you both relish what you like, and after all draw-backs upon those accounts duly made, find myself rich in the measure of your approbation that still remains. But above all I honour John Gilpin, since it was he who first encouraged you to write. I made him on purpose to laugh at, and he served his purpose well; but I am now in debt to him for a more valuable acquisition than all the laughter in the world amounts to, the recovery of my inter-

course with you, which is to me inestimable. My benevolent and generous Cousin, when I was once asked if I wanted any thing, and given delicately enough to understand that the enquirer was ready to supply all my occasions, I thankfully and civilly, but positively declined the favour. I neither suffer, nor have suffered any such inconveniences as I had not much rather endure, than come under obligations of that sort to a person comparatively with yourself a stranger to me. But to you I answer otherwise. I know you thoroughly, and the liberality of your disposition; and have that consummate confidence in the sincerity of your wish to serve me, that delivers me from all awkward constraint, and from all fear of trespassing by acceptance. To you, therefore, I reply, yes; whensoever, and whatsoever, and in what manner soever you please; and add, moreover, that my affection for the giver is such as will increase to me tenfold the satisfaction that I shall have in receiving. It is necessary, however, that I should let you a little into the state of my finances, that you may not suppose them more narrowly circumscribed than they are. Since Mrs. Unwin and I have lived at Olney, we have had but one purse; although, during the whole of that time, till lately, her income was nearly double mine. Her revenues, indeed, are now in some measure reduced, and do not much exceed my own: the worst consequence of this is, that we are forced to deny ourselves some things which hitherto we have been better able to afford; but they are such things as neither life nor the well-being of life depend upon. My own income has been better than it is, but when it was best, it would not have enabled me to live as my connections demanded that I should, had it not been combined with a better than itself, at least at this end of the kingdom. Of this I had full proof during three months that I spent in lodgings at Huntingdon, in which time, by the help of good management, and a clear notion of æconomical matters, I contrived to spend the income of a twelvemonth. Now, my beloved Cousin, you are in possession of the whole case as it stands. Strain no points to your own inconvenience or hurt, for there is no need of it; but indulge yourself in communicating (no matter what) that you can spare without missing it, since by so doing you will be sure to add to the comforts of my life, one of the sweetest that I can enjoy, a token and proof of your affection.

In the affairs of my next publication, toward which you also offer me so kindly your assistance, there will be no need that you should help me in the manner that you propose. It will be a large work, consisting, I should imagine, of six volumes at least. The twelfth of this month I shall have spent a year upon it, and it will cost me more than another. I do not love the booksellers well

enough to make them a present of such a labour, but intend to publish by subscription. Your vote and interest, my dear Cousin, upon the occasion, if you please, but nothing more! I will trouble you with some papers of proposals, when the time shall come, and am sure that you will circulate as many for me as you can. Now, my dear, I am going to tell you a secret. It is a great secret, that you must not whisper even to your cat. No creature is at this moment apprised of it, but Mrs. Unwin and her Son. I am making a new translation of Homer, and am upon the point of finishing the twenty-first book of the Iliad. The reasons upon which I undertake this Herculean labour, and by which I justify an enterprize in which I seem so effectually anticipated by Pope, although, in fact, he has not anticipated me at all, I may possibly give you, if you wish for them, when I can find nothing more interesting to say; a period which I do not conceive to be very near! I have not answered many things in your letter, nor can do it at present for want of room. I cannot believe but that I should know you, notwithstanding all that time may have done. There is not a feature of your face, could I meet it upon the road by itself, that I should not instantly recollect. I should say, that is my Cousin's nose, or those are her lips and her chin, and no woman upon earth can claim them but herself. As for me, I am a very smart youth of my years. I am not indeed grown grey so much as I am grown bald. No matter. There was more hair in the world than ever had the honour to belong to me. Accordingly, having found just enough to curl a little at my ears, and to intermix with a little of my own that still hangs behind, I appear, if you see me in an afternoon, to have a very decent head-dress, not easily distinguished from my natural growth; which being worn by a small bag, and a black riband about my neck, continues to me the charms of my youth, even on the verge of age. Away with the fear of writing too often.

Yours, my dearest Cousin,

W. C.

P. S. That the view I give you of myself may be complete, I add the two following items—That I am in debt to nobody, and that I grow fat.

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#### LETTER XLII.

To Lady HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

I am glad that I always loved you as I did. It releases me from any occasion to suspect that my present affection for you is indebted for its existence to any selfish consi-



derations. No. I am sure I love you disinterestedly, and for your own sake, because I never thought of you with any other sensations than those of the truest affection, even when I was under the influence of a persuasion, that I should never hear from you again. But with my present feelings, superadded to those that I always had for you, I find it no easy matter to do justice to my sensations. I perceive myself in a state of mind similar to that of the traveller, described in Pope's *Messiah*, who, as he passes through a sandy desert, starts at the sudden and unexpected sound of a waterfall. You have placed me in a situation new to me, and in which I feel myself somewhat puzzled how I ought to behave. At the same time that I would not grieve you by putting a check upon your bounty, I would be as careful not to abuse it, as if I were a miser, and the question not about your money but my own.

Although I do not suspect that a secret to you, my cousin, is any burthen, yet having maturely considered that point since I wrote my last, I feel myself altogether disposed to release you from the injunction to that effect under which I laid you. I have now made such a progress in my translation, that I need neither fear that I shall stop short of the end, nor that any other rider of Pegasus should overtake me. Therefore, if at any time it should fall fairly in your way, or you should feel yourself invited to say that I am so occupied, you have my Poetship's free permission. Dr. Johnson read and recommended my first volume.

W. C.

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LETTER XLIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

*Dec. 24, 1785.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

'Till I had made such a progress in my present undertaking as to put it out of all doubt that, if I lived, I should proceed in and finish it, I kept the matter to myself. It would have done me little honour to have told my friends that I had an arduous enterprize in hand, if afterwards I must have told them that I had dropped it. Knowing it to have been universally the opinion of the literati, ever since they have allowed themselves to consider the matter coolly, that a translation, properly so called, of Homer, is, notwithstanding what Pope has done, a desideratum in the English language, it struck me that an attempt to supply the deficiency would be an honourable one; and having made myself, in former years, somewhat critically a master of the



original, I was, by this double consideration, induced to make the attempt myself. I am now translating into blank verse the last book of the Iliad, and mean to publish by subscription.

W. C.

LETTER XLIV.

To Lady HESKETH

*Jan. 10, 1786.*

It gave me great pleasure that you found my friend Unwin, what I was sure you would find him, a most agreeable man. I did not usher him in with the marrow-bones and cleavers of high-sounding panegyric, both because I was certain that whatsoever merit he had, your discernment would mark it, and because it is possible to do a man material injury, by making his praise his harbinger. It is easy to raise expectation to such a pitch that the reality, be it ever so excellent, must necessarily fall below it.

I hold myself much indebted to Mr. —, of whom I have the first information from yourself, both for his friendly dispositions towards me, and for the manner in which he marks the defects in my volume. An author must be tender indeed, to wince on being touched so gently. It is undoubtedly as he says, and as you and my uncle say. You cannot be all mistaken, neither is it at all probable that any of you should be so. I take it for granted, therefore, that there are inequalities in the composition; and I do assure you, my dear, most faithfully, that if it should reach a second edition, I will spare no pains to improve it. It may serve me for an agreeable amusement, perhaps, when Homer shall be gone and done with. The first edition of poems has generally been susceptible of improvement. Pope, I believe, never published one in his life, that did not undergo variations, and his longest pieces many. I will only observe, that inequalities there must be always, and in every work of length. There are level parts of every subject, parts which we cannot, with propriety, attempt to elevate. They are by nature humble, and can only be made to assume an awkward and uncouth appearance by being mounted. But again, I take it for granted that this remark does not apply to the matter of your objection. You were sufficiently aware of it before, and have no need that I should suggest it as an apology, could it have served that office, but would have made it for me yourself. In truth, my dear, had you known in what anguish of mind I wrote the whole of that poem, and under what perpetual interruptions from a cause that has since been removed, so that

sometimes I had not an opportunity of writing more than three lines at a sitting, you would long since have wondered as much as I do myself, that it turned out any thing better than Grub-street.

My cousin, give yourself no trouble to find out any of the Magi to scrutinize my Homer. I can do without them; and if I were not conscous that I have no need of their help, I would be the first to call for it. Assure yourself that I intend to be careful to the utmost line of all possible caution, both with respect to language and versification. I will not send a verse to the press, that shall not have undergone the strictest examination.

A subscription is surely on every account the most eligible mode of publication. When I shall have emptied the purses of my friends and of their friends into my own, I am still free to levy contributions upon the world at large, and I shall then have a fund to defray the expenses of a new edition. I have ordered Johnson to print the proposals immediately, and hope that they will kiss your hands before the week is expired.

I have had the kindest letter from Josephus that I ever had. He mentioned my purpose to one of the masters of Eton, who replied, that "such a work is much wanted."

W. C.

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#### LETTER XLV.

To Lady HESKETH.

*Olney, Jan. 31, 1786.*

It is very pleasant, my dearest cousin, to receive a present so delicately conveyed as that which I received so lately from Anonymous, but it is also very painful to have nobody to thank for it. I find myself, therefore, driven by stress of necessity to the following resolution, viz. that I will constitute you my Thank-receiver-general, for whatsoever gift I shall receive hereafter, as well as for those that I have already received from a nameless benefactor. I therefore thank you, my cousin, for a most elegant present, including the most elegant compliment that ever Poet was honoured with; for a snuff-box of tortoise-shell, with a beautiful landscape on the lid of it, glazed with chrysal, having the figures of three hares in the fore-ground, and inscribed above with the words, *The Pheasant's Nest*, and below with these, *Tiney, Puss, and Bess*. For all, and every of these, I thank you, and also for standing proxy on this occasion. Nor must I forget to thank you, that so soon after I had sent you the first letter of Anonymous, I received another in the same hand. There—  
now I am a little easier.

I have almost conceived a design to send up half a dozen stout country-fellows, to tie by the leg to their respective bed-posts, the company that so abridges your opportunity of writing to me. Your letters are the joy of my heart, and I cannot endure to be robbed by, I know not whom, of half my treasure. But there is no comfort without a drawback, and therefore it is that I, who have unknown friends, have unknown enemies also. Ever since I wrote last, I find myself in better health, and my nocturnal spasms and fever considerably abated. I intend to write to Dr. Kerr on Thursday, that I may gratify him with an account of my amendment; for to him I know that it will be a gratification. Were he not a physician, I should regret that he lives so distant, for he is a most agreeable man; but being what he is, it would be impossible to have his company, even if he were a neighbour, unless in time of sickness, at which time, whatever charms he might have himself, my own must necessarily lose much of their effect on him.

When I write to you, my dear, what I have already related to the General, I am always fearful lest I should tell you that for news with which you are well acquainted. For once, however, I will venture. On Wednesday last I received from Johnson the manuscript copy of a specimen that I had sent to the General, and inclosed in the same cover notes upon it by an unknown critic. Johnson, in a short letter, recommended him to me as a man of unquestionable learning and ability. On perusal and consideration of his remarks, I found him such, and having nothing so much at heart as to give all possible security to yourself and the General, that my work shall not come forth unfinished, I answered Johnson, "that I would gladly submit my manuscript to his friend." He is, in truth, a very clever fellow, perfectly a stranger to me, and one who, I promise you, will not spare for severity of animadversion where he shall find occasion. It is impossible for you, my dearest cousin, to express a wish that I do not equally feel a wish to gratify. You are desirous that Maty should see a book of my Homer, and for that reason, if Maty *will* see a book of it, he shall be welcome, although time is likely to be precious; and, consequently, any delay that is not absolutely necessary, as much as possible, to be avoided. I am now revising the Iliad; it is a business that will cost me four months, perhaps five, for I compare the very words as I go, and if much alteration should occur, must transcribe the whole. The first book I have almost transcribed already. To these five months, Johnson says that nine more must be added for printing, and, upon my own experience, I will venture to assure you, that the tardiness of printers will make those nine months twelve. There is danger, therefore, that my sub-

scribers may think that I make them wait too long, and that they who know me not may suspect a bubble. How glad I shall be to read it over in an evening, book by book, as fast as I settle the copy, to you, and to Mrs. Unwin! She has been my touchstone always, and without reference to her taste and judgment, I have printed nothing. With one of you at each elbow, I should think myself the happiest of all poets.

The General and I, having broken the ice, are upon the most comfortable terms of correspondence. He writes very affectionately to me, and I say every thing to him that comes uppermost. I could not write frequently to any creature living upon any other terms than those. He tells me of infirmities that he has, which make him less active than he was. I am sorry to hear that he has any such. Alas! alas! he was young when I saw him only twenty years ago.

I have the most affectionate letter imaginable from Colman, who writes to me like a brother. The Chancellor is yet dumb.

May God have you in his keeping, my beloved cousin. Farewell.  
W. C.

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LETTER XLVI.

To Lady HESKETH.

*Olney, Feb. 9, 1786.*

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

I have been impatient to tell you, that I am impatient to see you again. Mrs. Unwin partakes with me in all my feelings upon this subject, and longs also to see you. I should have told you so by the last post, but have been so completely occupied by this tormenting specimen, that it was impossible to do it. I sent the General a letter on Monday, that would distress and alarm him: I sent him another yesterday, that will, I hope, quiet him again. Johnson has apologized very civilly for the multitude of his friend's strictures, and his friend has promised to confine himself in future to a comparison of me with the original, so that I doubt not we shall jog on merrily together. And now, my dear, let me tell you once more, that your kindness in promising us a visit has charmed us both. I shall see you again—I shall hear your voice; we shall take walks together; I will show you my prospects, the hovel, the alcove, the Ouse and its banks, every thing that I have described. I anticipate the pleasure of those days not very far distant, and feel a part of it at this moment. Talk not of an inn, mention it not for your life. We have never had so many visitors but we could easily accommodate them



all, though we have received Unwin, and his wife, and his sister, and his son, all at once. My dear, I will not let you come till the end of May, or beginning of June, because before that time my green-house will not be ready to receive us, and it is the only pleasant room belonging to us. When the plants go out, we go in. I line it with mats, and spread the floor with mats, and there you shall sit with a bed of mignonette at your side, and a hedge of honey-suckles, roses, and jasmine; and I will make you a bouquet of myrtle every day. Sooner than the time I mention, the country will not be in complete beauty. And I will tell you what you shall find at your first entrance. Imprimis, as soon as you have entered the vestibule, if you cast a look on either side of you, you shall see on the right hand a box of my making. It is the box in which have been lodged all my hares, and in which lodges Puss at present. But he, poor fellow, is worn out with age, and promises to die before you can see him. On the right hand stands a cupboard, the work of the same author. It was once a dove-cage, but I transformed it. Opposite to you stands a table which I also made, but a merciless servant having scrubbed it until it became paralytic, it serves no purpose now but of ornament, and all my clean shoes stand under it. On the left hand, at the farther end of this superb vestibule, you will find the door of the parlour, into which I will conduct you, and where I will introduce you to Mrs. Unwin, (unless we should meet her before), and where we will be as happy as the day is long. Order yourself, my cousin, to the Swan, at Newport, and there you shall find me ready to conduct you to Olney.

My dear, I have told Homer what you say about casks and urns, and have asked him whether he is sure that it is a cask in which Jupiter keeps his wine. He swears that it is a cask, and that it will never be any thing better than a cask to eternity. So if the god is content with it, we must even wonder at his taste, and be so too.

Adieu, my dearest cousin.

W. C.

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#### LETTER XLVII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*Olney, Feb. 11, 1786.*

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

It must be, I suppose, a fortnight or thereabout, since I wrote last, I feel myself so alert and so ready to write again. Be that as it may, here I come. We talk of nobody but you; what we will do with you, when we get you; where you



shall walk, where you shall sleep; in short, every thing that bears the remotest relation to your well-being at Olney, occupies all our talking time, which is all that I do not spend at Troy.

I have every reason for writing to you as often as I can, but I have a particular reason for doing it now. I want to tell you that by the Diligence on Wednesday next I mean to send you a quire of my Homer for Maty's perusal. It will contain the first book, and as much of the second as brings us to the catalogue of the ships, and is every morsel of the revised copy that I have transcribed. My dearest cousin, read it yourself—Let the General read it. Do what you please with it, so that it reach Johnson in due time; but let Maty be the only *Critic* that has any thing to do with it. The vexation, the perplexity that attends a multiplicity of criticisms by various hands, many of which are sure to be futile, many of them ill-founded, and some of them contradictory to others, is inconceivable, except by the author whose ill-fated work happens to be the subject of them. This also appears to me self-evident; that if a work have past under the review of one man of taste and learning, and have had the good fortune to please him, his approbation gives security for that of all others qualified like himself. I speak thus, my dear, after having just escaped from such a storm of trouble, occasioned by endless remarks, hints, suggestions, and objections, as drove me almost to despair, and to the very edge of a resolution to drop my undertaking forever. With infinite difficulty I, at last, sifted the chaff from the wheat, availed myself of what appeared to me to be just, and rejected the rest; but not till the labour and anxiety had nearly undone all that Kerr had been doing for me. My beloved cousin, trust me for it, as you safely may, that temper, vanity and self-importance had nothing to do in all this distress that I suffered. It was merely the effect of an alarm that I could not help taking, when I compared the great trouble I had with a few lines only, thus handled, with that which I foresaw such handling of the whole must necessarily give me. I felt before-hand that my constitution would not bear it. I shall send up this second specimen in a box that I have had made on purpose; and when Maty has done with the copy, and you have done with it yourself, then you must return it in said box to my translatorship. Though Johnson's friend has teased me sadly, I verily believe that I shall have no more such cause to complain of him. We now understand one another, and I firmly believe that I might have gone the world through, before I had found his equal in an accurate and familiar acquaintance with the original.

A letter to Mr. Urban, in the last Gentleman's Magazine, of

which I's book is the subject, pleases me more than any thing I have seen in the way of eulogium yet. I have no guess of the author.

I do not wish to remind the Chancellor of his promise. Ask you why, my cousin? Because, I suppose, it would be impossible. He has, no doubt, forgotten it entirely, and would be obliged to take my word for the truth of it, which I could not bear. We drank tea together with Mrs. C——e and her sister, in King's-street, Bloomsbury, and there was the promise made. I said, Thurlow, I am nobody, and shall be always nobody, and you will be Chancellor: you shall provide for me when you are. He smiled and replied, I surely will. These ladies, said I, are witnesses. He still smiled, and said, let them be so, for I will certainly do it. But alas! twenty-four years have passed since the day of the date thereof, and to mention it now would be to upbraid him with inattention to his plighted troth. Neither do I suppose he could easily serve such a creature as I am if he would.

Adieu, whom I love entirely.

W. C.

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LETTER XLVIII.

To Lady HESKETH:

*Olney, Feb. 19, 1786.*

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Since so it must be, so it shall be. If you will not sleep under the roof of a friend, may you never sleep under the roof of an enemy. An enemy, however, you will not presently find. Mrs. Unwin bids me mention her affectionately, and tell you, that she willingly gives up a part for the sake of the rest, willingly, at least as far as willingly may consist with some reluctance: I feel my reluctance too. Our design was, that you should have slept in the room that serves me for a study, and its having been occupied by you would have been an additional recommendation of it to me. But all reluctances are superseded by the thought of seeing you; and because we have nothing so much at heart as the wish to see you happy and comfortable, we are desirous, therefore, to accommodate you to your own mind, and not to ours. Mrs. Unwin has already secured for you an apartment, or rather two, just such as we could wish. The house in which you will find them is within thirty yards of our own, and opposite to it. The whole affair is thus commodiously adjusted; and now I have nothing to do but to wish for June, and June, my cousin, was never so wished for since June was made. I shall have

a thousand things to hear, and a thousand to say, and they will all rush into my mind together, till it will be so crowded with things impatient to be said, that for some time I shall say nothing. But no matter—Sooner or later they will all come out; and since we shall have you the longer, for not having you under our own roof, (a circumstance that more than any thing reconciles us to that measure) they will stand the better chance. After so long a separation, a separation that, of late, seemed likely to last for life, we shall meet each other, as alive from the dead; and, for my own part, I can truly say, that I have not a friend in the other world whose resurrection would give me greater pleasure.

I am truly happy, my dear, in having pleased you with what you have seen of my Homer. I wish that all English readers had your unsophisticated, or rather unadulterated taste, and could relish simplicity like you. But I am well aware that in this respect I am under a disadvantage, and that many, especially many ladies, missing many turns and prettinesses of expression that they have admired in Pope, will account my translation in those particulars defective. But I comfort myself with the thought, that in reality it is no defect; on the contrary, that the want of all such embellishments as do not belong to the original, will be one of its principal merits with persons indeed capable of relishing Homer. He is the best Poet that ever lived for many reasons, but for none more than for that majestic plainness that distinguishes him from all others. As an accomplished person moves gracefully without thinking of it, in like manner the dignity of Homer seems to cost him no labour. It was natural to him to say great things, and to say them well, and little ornaments were beneath his notice. If Maty, my dearest cousin, should return to you my copy with any such strictures as may make it necessary for me to see it again before it goes to Johnson, in that case you shall send it to me; otherwise to Johnson immediately: for he writes me word he wishes his friend to go to work upon it as soon as possible. When you come, my dear, we will hang all these critics together, for they have worried me without remorse or conscience, at least one of them has: I had actually murdered more than a few of the best lines in the specimen, in compliance with his requisitions, but plucked up my courage at last, and in the very last opportunity that I had, recovered them to life again by restoring the original reading. At the same time I readily confess that the specimen is the better for all this discipline its author has undergone; but then it has been more indebted for its improvement to that pointed accuracy of examination, to which I was myself excited, than to any proposed amendments from Mr. Critic; for as sure as you are my cousin, whom

I long to see at Olney, so surely would he have done me irreparable mischief, if I would have given him leave.

My friend Bagot writes to me in a most friendly strain, and calls loudly upon me for original poetry. When I shall have done with Homer, probably he will not call in vain; having found the prime feather of a swan on the banks of the *snug and silver Trent*, he keeps it for me.

Adieu, dear cousin.

W. C.

I am sorry that the General has such indifferent health. He must not die. I can by no means spare a person so kind to me.

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LETTER XLIX.

To Lady HESKETH.

*Olney, March 6, 1786.*

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Your opinion has more weight with me than that of all the critics in the world, and to give you a proof of it, I make you a concession that I would hardly have made to them all united. I do not, indeed, absolutely covenant, promise, and agree, that I will discard *all* my elisions, but I hereby bind myself to dismiss *as many* of them, as, without sacrificing energy to sound, I can. It is incumbent upon me, in the mean time, to say something in justification of the few that I shall retain, that I may not seem a Poet mounted rather on a mule than on Pegasus. In the first place, *The*, is a barbarism. We are indebted for it to the Celts, or the Goths, or to the Saxons, or perhaps to them all. In the two best languages that ever were spoken, the Greek and the Latin, there is no similar incumbrance of expression to be found. Secondly, the perpetual use of it in our language is, to us miserable poets, attended with two great inconveniences. Our verse consisting only of ten syllables, it not unfrequently happens, that the fifth part of a line is to be engrossed, and necessarily too, (unless elision prevents it) by this abominable intruder; and which is worse in my account, open vowels are continually the consequence:—*The* element—*The* air, &c. Thirdly, the French, who are equally with the English chargeable with barbarism in this particular, dispose of their *Le* and their *La* without ceremony, and always take care that they shall be absorbed, both in verse and in prose, in the vowel that immediately follows them. Fourthly, and I believe lastly, (and for your sake I wish it may prove so) the practice of cutting short a *The* is warranted by Milton, who, of all English poets that ever lived, had certainly the finest ear. Dr. Warton indeed has dared to say that he had a bad one, for which



he deserves, as far as critical demerit can deserve it, to lose his own. I thought I had done, but there is still a fifthly behind, and it is this; that the custom of abbreviating *The* belongs to the stile in which, in my advertisement annexed to the specimen, I profess to write. The use of that stile would have warranted me in the practice of much greater liberty of this sort than I ever intended to take. In perfect consistence with that stile I might say I' th' tempest, I' th' door-way, &c. which, however, I would not allow myself to do, because I was aware that it would be objected to, and with reason. But it seems to me, for the causes above said, that when I shorten *The*, before a vowel, or before *wh*, as in the line you mention,

“Than th' whole broad Hellespont in all his parts,”

my licence is not equally exceptionable. Because *W*, though he rank as a consonant in the word *whole*, is not allowed to announce himself to the ear, and *H* is an aspirate. But as I said at the beginning, so say I still, I am most willing to conform myself to your very sensible observation, that it is necessary, if we would please, to consult the taste of our own day. Neither would I have pelted you, my dearest cousin, with any part of this volley of good reasons, had I not designed them as an answer to those objections which you say you have heard from others. But I only mention them. Though satisfactory to myself, I wave them, and will allow to *The* his whole dimensions, whensoever it can be done.

Thou only Critic of my verse that is to be found in all the earth whom I love, what shall I say in answer to your own objection to that passage—

“Softly he placed his hand

“On th' old man's hand, and push'd it gently away.”

I can say neither more nor less than this, that when our dear friend the General sent me his opinion of the specimen, quoting those very words from it, he added, “With this part I was particularly pleased: there is nothing in poetry more descriptive.” Such were his very words. Taste, my dear, is various; there is nothing so various, and even between persons of the best taste there are diversities of opinion on the same subject, for which it is not possible to account. So much for these matters.

You advise me to consult the General, and to confide in him. I follow your advice, and have done both. By the last post I asked his permission to send him the Books of my Homer, as fast as I should finish them off. I shall be glad of his remarks, and more glad than of any thing, to do that which I hope may be agree-



able to him. They will of course pass into your hands before they are sent to Johnson. The quire that I sent is now in the hands of Johnson's friend. I intended to have told you in my last, but forgot it, that Johnson behaves very handsomely in the affair of my two volumes. He acts with a liberality not often found in persons of his occupation, and to mention it when occasion calls me to it, is a justice due to him.

I am very much pleased with Mr. Stanley's letter—several compliments were paid me on the subject of that first volume by my own friends, but I do not recollect that I ever knew the opinion of a stranger about it before, whether favourable or otherwise: I only heard by a side wind that it was very much read in Scotland, and more than here.

Farewell, my dearest cousin, whom we expect, of whom we talk continually, and whom we continually long for.

W. C

Your anxious wishes for my success delight me, and you may rest assured, my dear, that I have all the ambition on the subject that you can wish me to feel. I more than admire my author. I often stand astonished at his beauties. I am for ever amused with the translation of him, and I have received a thousand encouragements. These are all so many happy omens that, I hope, shall be verified by the event.

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LETTER L.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

*April 5, 1786.*

I did, as you suppose, bestow all possible consideration on the subject of an apology for my Homeric undertaking. I turned the matter about in my mind an hundred different ways, and in every way in which it would present itself, found it an impracticable business. It is impossible for me, with what delicacy soever I may manage it, to state the objections that lie against Pope's translation, without incurring odium, and the imputation of arrogance: foreseeing this danger, I choose to say nothing.

W. C.

P. S. You may well wonder at my courage, who have undertaken a work of such enormous length. You would wonder more if you knew that I translated the whole Iliad with no other help than a Clavis. But I have since equipped myself better for this immense journey, and am revising the work in company with a good commentator.

LETTER LI.  
To Lady HESKETH.

*Olney, April 17, 1786.*

If you will not quote Solomon, my dearest cousin, I will. He says, and as beautifully as truly—"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life!" I feel how much reason he had on his side when he made this observation, and am myself sick of your fortnight's delay.

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The Vicarage was built by Lord Dartmouth, and was not finished till some time after we arrived at Olney; consequently it is new. It is a smart stone building, well sashed, by much too good for the living, but just what I would wish for you. It has, as you justly concluded from my premises, a garden, but rather calculated for use than ornament. It is square, and well walled, but has neither arbour nor alcove, nor other shade, except the shadow of the house. But we have two gardens, which are yours. Between your mansion and ours is interposed nothing but an orchard, into which a door, opening out of our garden, affords us the easiest communication imaginable, will save the round about by the town, and make both houses one. Your chamber windows look over the river, and over the meadows, to a village called Emberton, and command the whole length of a long bridge, described by a certain Poet, together with a view of the road at a distance. Should you wish for books at Olney, you must bring them with you, or you will wish in vain; for I have none but the works of a certain Poet, Cowper, of whom, perhaps, you have heard, and they are as yet but two volumes. They may multiply hereafter, but at present they are no more.

You are the first person for whom I have heard Mrs. Unwin express such feelings as she does for you. She is not profuse in professions, nor forward to enter into treaties of friendship with new faces; but when her friendship is once engaged, it may be confided in even unto death. She loves you already, and how much more will she love you before this time twelvemonth! I have indeed endeavoured to describe you to her; but perfectly as I have you by heart, I am sensible that my picture cannot do you justice: I never saw one that did. Be you what you may, you are much beloved, and will be so at Olney; and Mrs. Unwin expects you with the pleasure that one feels at the return of a long absent, dear relation; that is to say, with a pleasure such as mine. She sends you her warmest affections.

On Friday I received a letter from dear Anonymous, apprising me of a parcel that the coach would bring me on Saturday. Who is there in the world that has, or thinks he has, reason to love me to the degree that he does? But it is no matter. He chooses to be unknown, and his choice is and ever shall be so sacred to me, that if his name lay on the table before me reversed, I would not turn the paper about that I might read it. Much as it would gratify me to thank him, I would turn my eyes away from the forbidden discovery. I long to assure him that those same eyes, concerning which he expresses such kind apprehensions least they should suffer by this laborious undertaking, are as well as I could expect them to be, if I were never to touch either book or pen. Subject to weakness, and occasional slight inflammations, it is probable that they will always be; but I cannot remember the time when they enjoyed any thing so like an exemption from those infirmities as at present. One would almost suppose that reading Homer were the best ophthalmic in the world. I should be happy to remove his solicitude on the subject, but it is a pleasure that he will not let me enjoy. Well, then, I will be content without it; and so content, that though I believe you, my dear, to be in full possession of all this mystery, you shall never know me while you live, either directly, or by hints of any sort, attempt to extort or to steal the secret from you. I should think myself as justly punishable as the Bethshemites, for looking into the ark which they were not allowed to touch.

I have not sent for Kerr, for Kerr can do nothing but send me to Bath, and to Bath I cannot go for a thousand reasons. The summer will set me up again; I grow fat every day, and shall be as big as Gog, or Magog, or both put together, before you come.

I did actually live three years with Mr. Chapman, a Solicitor, that is to say, I slept three years in his house, but I lived, that is to say, I spent my days, in Southampton-Row, as you very well remember. There was I, and the future Lord Chancellor, constantly employed, from morning to night, in giggling, and making giggle, instead of studying the law. O fie, cousin, how could you do so? I am pleased with Lord Thurlow's inquiries about me. If he takes it into that inimitable head of his, he may make a man of me yet. I could love him heartily, if he would but deserve it at my hands. That I did so once, is certain. The Dutchess of —, who in the world set her agoing? But if all the Dutchesses in the world were spinning, like so many whirligigs, for my benefit, I would not stop them. It is a noble thing to be a Poet, it makes all the world so lively. I might have preached more

sermons than even Tillotson did, and better, and the world would have been still fast asleep; but a volume of verse is a fiddle that puts the universe in motion. W. C.

## LETTER LII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*Olney, April 24, 1786.*

Your letters are so much my comfort that I often tremble lest by any accident I should be disappointed; and the more, because you have been, more than once, so engaged in company on the writing day, that I have had a narrow escape. Let me give you a piece of good counsel, my cousin: Follow my laudable example—write when you can—take time's forelock in one hand, and a pen in the other, and so make sure of your opportunity. It is well for me that you write faster than any body, and more in an hour than other people in two, else I know not what would become of me. When I read your letters I hear you talk, and I love talking letters dearly, especially from you. Well, the middle of June will not be always a thousand years off, and when it comes I shall hear you, and see you too, and shall not care a farthing then if you do not touch a pen in a month. By the way, you must either send me or bring me some more paper, for before the moon shall have performed a few more revolutions, I shall not have a scrap left; and tedious revolutions they are just now, that is certain.

I give you leave to be as peremptory as you please, especially at a distance; but when you say that you are a Cowper, (and the better it is for the Cowpers that such you are, and I give them joy of you with all my heart) you must not forget that I boast myself a Cowper too, and have my humours, and fancies, and purposes, and determinations, as well as others of my name, and hold them as fast as they can. *You* indeed tell *me* how often I shall see you when you come. A pretty story truly. I am a *He* Cowper, my dear, and claim the privileges that belong to my noble sex. But these matters shall be settled, as my cousin Agamemnon used to say, at a more convenient time.

I shall rejoice to see the letter you promise me; for though I met with a morsel of praise last week, I do not know that the week current is likely to produce me any; and having lately been pretty much pampered with that diet, I expect to find myself rather hungry by the time when your next letter shall arrive. It will therefore be very opportune. The morsel above alluded to came from—whom do you think? From —; but she desires that her



authorship may be a secret. And in my answer I promised not to divulge it, except to you. It is a pretty copy of verses neatly written, and well turned, and when you come you shall see them. I intend to keep all pretty things to myself till then, that they may serve me as a bait to lure you hither more effectually. The last letter that I had from —, I received so many years since, that it seems as if it had reached me a good while before I was born.

I was grieved at the heart that the General could not come, and that illness was in part the cause that hindered him. I have sent him, by his express desire, a new edition of the first book, and half the second. He would not suffer me to send it to you, my dear, least you should post it away to Maty at once. He did not give that reason, but being shrewd, I found it.

The grass begins to grow, and the leaves to bud, and every thing is preparing to be beautiful against you come. Adieu.

W. C.

You inquire of our walks, I perceive, as well as of our rides. They are beautiful. You inquire also concerning a cellar. You have two cellars. Oh! what years have passed since we took the same walks, and drank out of the same bottle! but a few more weeks, and then!

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LETTER LIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*Olney, May 8, 1786.*

I did not at all doubt that your tenderness for my feelings had inclined you to suppress in your letters to me the intelligence concerning Maty's critique, that yet reached me from another quarter. When I wrote to you I had not learned it from the General, but from my friend Bull, who only knew it by hear-say. The next post brought me the news of it from the first mentioned, and the critique itself inclosed. Together with it came also a squib discharged against me in the Public Advertiser. The General's letter found me in one of my most melancholy moods, and my spirits did not rise on the receipt of it. The letter, indeed, that he had cut from the news-paper gave me little pain, both because it contained nothing formidable, though written with malevolence enough, and because a nameless author can have no more weight with his readers than the reason which he has on his side can give him. . But Maty's animadversions hurt me more. In part they appeared to me unjust, and in part ill-natured; and yet the man himself being an oracle in every body's account, I apprehended that he had done me much mischief.



Why he says that the translation is far from exact, is best known to himself: for I know it to be as exact as is compatible with poetry; and prose translations of Homer are not wanted; the world has one already. But I will not fill my letter to you with hypercriticisms; I will only add an extract from a letter of Colman's, that I received last Friday, and will then dismiss the subject. It came accompanied by a copy of the specimen, which he himself had amended, and with so much taste and candour that it charmed me. He says as follows:

“ One copy I have returned, with some remarks, prompted by my zeal for your success; not, Heaven knows, by arrogance or impertinence. I know no other way, at once so plain and so short, of delivering my thoughts on the specimen of your translation, which, on the whole, I admire exceedingly; thinking it breathes the spirit, and conveys the manner of the original; though having here neither Homer, nor Pope's Homer, I cannot speak precisely of particular lines or expressions, or compare your blank verse with his rhyme, except by declaring, that I think blank verse infinitely more congenial to the magnificent simplicity of Homer's hexameters, than the confined couplets, and the jingle of rhyme.”

His amendments are chiefly bestowed on the lines encumbered with elisions; and I will just take this opportunity to tell you, my dear, because I know you to be as much interested in what I write as myself, that some of the most offensive of these elisions were occasioned by mere criticism. I was fairly hunted into them by vexatious objections made without end by — and his friend, and altered, and altered, till at last I did not care how I altered. Many thanks for —'s verses, which deserve just the character you give of them: they are neat and easy—but I would numble her well if I could get at her, for allowing herself to suppose for a moment that I praised the Chancellor with a view to emolument. I wrote those stanzas merely for my own amusement, and they slept in a dark closet years after I composed them; not in the least designed for publication. But when Johnson had printed off the longer pieces of which the first volume principally consists, he wrote me word that he wanted yet two thousand lines to swell it to a proper size. On that occasion it was, that I collected every scrap of verse that I could find, and that among the rest. None of the smaller poems had been introduced, or had been published at all with my name, but for this necessity.

Just as I wrote the last word, I was called down to Dr. Kerr, who came to pay me a voluntary visit. Were I sick, his cheerful and friendly manner would almost restore me. Air and exer-

cise are his theme; them he recommends as the best physic for me, and in all weathers. Come, therefore, my dear, and take a little of this good physic with me, for you will find it beneficial as well as I; come and assist Mrs. Unwin in the re-establishment of your cousin's health. Air and exercise, and she and you together, will make me a perfect Samson. You will have a good house over your head, comfortable apartments, obliging neighbours, good roads, a pleasant country, and in us your constant companions, two who will love you, and do already love you dearly, and with all our hearts. If you are in any danger of trouble, it is from myself, if my fits of dejection seize me; and as often as they do, you will be grieved for me: but perhaps by your assistance I shall be able to resist them better. If there is a creature under Heaven, from whose co-operations with Mrs. Unwin I can reasonably expect such a blessing, that creature is yourself. I was not without such attacks when I lived in London, though at that time they were less oppressive; but in your company I was never unhappy a whole day in all my life.

Of how much importance is an author to himself! I return to that abominable specimen again, just to notice Maty's impatient censure of the repetition that you mention. I mean of the word *Hand*. In the original there is not a repetition of it. But to repeat a word in that manner, and on such an occasion, is by no means what he calls it, a *modern* invention. In Homer I could show him many such, and in Virgil they abound. Colman, who in his judgment of classical matters is inferior to none, says, "*I know not why Maty objects to this expression.*" I could easily change it, but the case standing thus, I know not whether my proud stomach will condescend so low. I rather feel myself disinclined to it.

One evening last week Mrs. Unwin and I took our walk to Weston, and as we were returning through the grove, opposite the house, the Throckmortons presented themselves at the door. They are owners of a house at Weston, at present empty. It is a very good one, infinitely superior to ours. When we drank chocolate with them, they both expressed their ardent desire that we would take it, wishing to have us for nearer neighbours. If you, my cousin, were not so well provided for as you are, and at our very elbow, I verily believe I should have mustered all my rhetoric to recommend it to you. You might have it for ever without danger of ejection; whereas your possession of the vicarage depends on the life of the vicar, who is eighty-six. The environs are most beautiful, and the village itself one of the prettiest I ever saw. Add to this, you would step immediately into Mr. Throckmorton's pleasure-ground, where you would not soil your slipper even in

winter. A most unfortunate mistake was made by that gentleman's bailiff in his absence. Just before he left Weston last year, for the winter, he gave him orders to cut short the tops of the flowering shrubs, that lined a serpentine walk in a delightful grove, celebrated by my poetship in a little piece that you remember was called the "Shrubbery." The dunce, misapprehending the order, cut down and faggotted up the whole grove, leaving neither tree, bush, nor twig; nothing but stumps about as high as my ankle. Mrs. Throckmorton told us that she never saw her husband so angry in his life. I judge indeed by his physiognomy, which has great sweetness in it, that he is very little addicted to that infernal passion; but had he cudgelled the man for his cruel blunder, and the havoc made in consequence of it, I could have excused him.

I felt myself really concerned for the Chancellor's illness, and from what I learned of it, both from the papers and from General Cowper, concluded that he must die. I am accordingly delighted in the same proportion with the news of his recovery. May he live, and live to be still the support of government! If it shall be his good pleasure to render me personally any material service, I have no objection to it; but Heaven knows that it is impossible for any living wight to bestow less thought on that subject than myself.

May God be ever with you, my beloved cousin.

W. C.

#### LETTER LIV.

To Lady HESKETH.

*Olney, May 15, 1786.*

From this very morning I begin to date the last month of our long separation, and confidently, and most comfortably hope, that before the 15th of June shall present itself, we shall have seen each other. Is it not so? And will it not be one of the most extraordinary æras of my extraordinary life? A year ago, we neither corresponded nor expected to meet in this world. But this world is a scene of marvellous ovents, many of them more marvellous than fiction itself would dare to hazard; and, blessed be God! they are not all of the distressing kind; now and then, in the course of an existence whose hue is for the most part sable, a day turns up that makes amends for many sighs, and many subjects of complaint. Such a day shall I account the day of your arrival at Olney.

Wherefore is it, canst thou tell me, that, together with all those delightful sensations to which the sight of a long absent



dear friend gives birth, there is a mixture of something painful? Flutterings, and tumults, and I know not what accompaniments of our pleasure, that are, in fact, perfectly foreign from the occasion? Such I feel when I think of our meeting, and such, I suppose, feel you; and the nearer the crisis approaches the more I am sensible of them. I know, beforehand, that they will increase with every turn of the wheels that shall convey me to Newport, when I shall set out to meet you, and that when we actually meet, the pleasure, and this unaccountable pain together, will be as much as I shall be able to support. I am utterly at a loss for the cause, and can only resolve it into that appointment, by which it has been fore-ordained that all human delights shall be qualified and mingled with their contraries. For there is nothing formidable in you, to me at least, there is nothing such. No, not even in your menaces, unless when you threaten me to write no more. Nay, I verily believe, did I not know you to be what you are, and had less affection for you than I have, I should have fewer of these emotions, of which I would have none if I could help it. But a fig for them all! Let us resolve to combat with, and to conquer them. They are dreams, they are illusions of the judgment: some enemy that hates the happiness of human kind, and is ever industrious to dash it, works them in us, and their being so perfectly unreasonably as they are is a proof of it. Nothing that *is* such can be the work of a good agent. This I know too by experience, that, like all other illusions, they exist only by force of imagination—are indebted for their prevalence to the absence of their object, and in a few moments after its appearance cease. So, then, this is a settled point, and the case stands thus: You will tremble as you draw near to Newport, and so shall I: but we will both recollect that there is no reason why we should, and this recollection will at least have some little effect in our favour. We will likewise both take the comfort of what we know to be true, that the tumult will soon cease, and the pleasure long survive the pain, even as long, I trust, as we ourselves shall survive it.

What you say of Maty gives me all the consolation that you intended. We both think it highly probable that you suggest the true cause of his displeasure, when you suppose him mortified at not having had a part of the translation laid before him, ere the specimen was published. The General was very much hurt, and calls his censure harsh and unreasonable. He likewise sent me a consolatory letter on the occasion, in which he took the kindest pains to heal the wound that he supposed I might have suffered. I am not naturally insensible, and the sensibilities that I had by nature have been wonderfully enhanced by a long series of shocks,

given to a frame of nerves that was never very athletic. I feel accordingly, whether painful or pleasant, in the extreme—am easily elevated, and easily cast down. The frown of a critic freezes my poetical powers, and discourages me to a degree that makes me ashamed of my own weakness. Yet I presently recover my confidence again. The half of what you so kindly say in your last, would at any time restore my spirits, and being said by you, is infallible. I am not ashamed to confess, that having commenced an Author, I am most abundantly desirous to succeed as such. *I have (what perhaps you little suspect me of) in my nature, an infinite share of ambition.* But with it, I have, at the same time, as you well know, an equal share of diffidence. To this combination of opposite qualities it has been owing, that till lately I stole through life without undertaking any thing, yet always wishing to distinguish myself. At last I ventured, ventured too in the only path that, at so late a period, was yet open to me, and am determined, if God have not determined otherwise, to work my way through the obscurity that has been so long my portion into notice. Every thing, therefore, that seems to threaten this my favourite purpose with disappointment, affects me nearly. I suppose that all ambitious minds are in the same predicament. He who seeks distinction must be sensible of disapprobation exactly in the same proportion as he desires applause. And now, my precious cousin, I have unfolded my heart to you in this particular without a speck of dissimulation. Some people, and good people too, would blame me, but you will not, and they I think would blame without just cause. We certainly do not honour God when we bury, or when we neglect to improve as far as we may whatever talent he may have bestowed on us, whether it be little or much. In natural things, as well as in spiritual, it is a never-failing truth, that to him who *hath*, that is, to him who occupies what he hath diligently, and so as to increase it, more shall be given. Set me down, therefore, my dear, for an industrious rhymers, so long as I shall have the ability; for in this only way is it possible for me, so far as I can see, either to honour God, or to serve man, or even to serve myself.

I rejoice to hear that Mr. Throckmorton wishes to be on a more intimate footing. I am shy, and suspect that he is not very much otherwise; and the consequence has been, that we have mutually wished an acquaintance without being able to accomplish it. Blessings on you for the hint that you dropt on the subject of the house at Weston; for the burthen of my song is, since we have met once again, let us never be separated, as we have been, more.

W. C.



## LETTER LV.

To Lady HESKETH.

*Olney, May 15, 1786.*

I have at length, my cousin, found my way into my summer abode. I believe that I described it to you some time since, and will therefore now leave it undescribed. I will only say that I am writing in a band-box, situated, at least in my account, delightfully, because it has a window in one side that opens into that orchard through which, as I am sitting here, I shall see you often pass, and which, therefore, I already prefer to all the orchards in the world. You do well to prepare me for all possible delays, because in this life all sorts of disappointments are possible, and I shall do well, if any such delay of your journey should happen, to practise that lesson of patience which you inculcate. But it is a lesson which, even with you for my teacher, I shall be slow to learn. Being sure, however, that you will not procrastinate without cause, I will make myself as easy as I can about it, and hope the best. To convince you how much I am under discipline and good advice, I will lay aside a favourite measure, influenced in doing so by nothing but the good sense of your contrary opinion. I had set my heart on meeting you at Newport. In my haste to see you once again, I was willing to overlook many awkwardnesses I could not but foresee would attend it. I put them aside so long as I only foresaw them myself, but since I find that you foresee them too, I can no longer deal so slightly with them. It is therefore determined that we meet at Olney. Much I shall feel; but I will not die if I can help it, and I beg that you will take all possible care to outlive it likewise, for I know what it is to be balked in the moment of acquisition, and should be loth to know it again.

Last Monday, in the evening, we walked to Weston, according to our usual custom. It happened, owing to a mistake of time, that we set out half an hour sooner than usual. This mistake we discovered while we were in the wilderness; so, finding that we had time before us, as they say, Mrs. Unwin proposed that we should go into the village, and take a view of the house that I had just mentioned to you. We did so, and found it such a one as in most respects would suit you well. But Moses Brown, our vicar, who, as I told you, is in his eighty-sixth year, is not bound to die for that reason. He said himself, when he was here last summer, that he should live ten years longer, and for aught that appears, so he may. In which case, for the sake of its near neighbourhood to us, the vicarage has charms for me that no other

place can rival. But this, and a thousand things more, shall be talked over when you come.

We have been industriously cultivating our acquaintance with our Weston neighbours since I wrote last, and they, on their part, have been equally diligent in the same cause. I have a notion that we shall all suit well. I see much in them both that I admire. You know, perhaps, that they are Catholics.

It is a delightful bundle of praise, my cousin, that you have sent me: all jasmine and lavender. Whoever the lady is, she has evidently an admirable pen, and a cultivated mind. If a person reads, it is no matter in what language; and if the mind be informed, it is no matter whether that mind belongs to a man or a woman. The taste and the judgment will receive the benefit alike in both.—Long before the *Task* was published, I made an experiment one day, being in a frolicsome mood, upon my friend: We were walking in the garden, and conversing on a subject similar to these lines:—

The few that pray at all, pray oft amiss,  
And seeking grace t' improve the present good,  
Would urge a wiser suit than asking more.

I repeated them, and said to him with an air of non-chalance, “Do you recollect those lines? I have seen them somewhere; where are they?” He put on a considering face, and after some deliberation replied—“Oh, I will tell you wheré they must be—in the *Night Thoughts*.” I was glad my trial turned out so well, and did not undeceive him. I mention this occurrence only in confirmation of the letter-writer's opinion; but, at the same time, I do assure you, on the faith of an honest man, that I never in my life designed an imitation of Young, or of any other writer; for mimicry is my abhorrence, at least in poetry.

Assure yourself, my dearest cousin, that both for your sake, since you make a point of it, and for my own, I will be as philosophically careful as possible that these fine nerves of mine shall not be beyond measure agitated when you arrive. In truth, there is much greater probability that they will be benefited, and greatly too. Joy of heart, from whatever occasion it may arise, is the best of all nervous medicines, and I should not wonder if such a turn given to my spirits, should have even a lasting effect, of the most advantageous kind, upon them. You must not imagine, neither, that I am, on the whole, in any great degree, subject to nervous affections; occasionally I am, and have been these many years much liable to dejection. But at intervals, and sometimes for an interval of weeks, no creature would suspect it. For I

have not that which commonly is a symptom of such a case belonging to me: I mean extraordinary elevation in the absence of Mr. Blue-Devil. When I am in the best health, my tide of animal sprightliness flows with great equality, so that I am never, at any time, exalted in proportion as I am sometimes depressed. My depression has a cause, and if that cause were to cease, I should be as cheerful thenceforth, and perhaps for ever, as any man need be. But as I have often said, Mrs. Unwin shall be my expositor.

Adieu, my beloved cousin. God grant that our friendship, which, while we could see each other, never suffered a moment's interruption, and which so long a separation has not in the least abated, may glow in us to our last hour, and be renewed in a better world, there to be perpetuated for ever. For you must know that I should not love you half so well, if I did not believe you would be my friend to eternity. There is not room enough for friendship to unfold itself in full bloom, in such a nook of life as this. Therefore I am, and must, and will be, yours for ever,

W. C.

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LETTER LVI.

To Lady HESKETH.

*Olney, May 29, 1786.*

Thou dear, comfortable cousin, whose letters, among all that I receive, have this property peculiarly their own, that I expect them without trembling, and never find any thing in them that does not give me pleasure! for which, therefore, I would take nothing in exchange that the world could give me, save and except that for which I must exchange them soon, (and happy shall I be to do so) your own company. That, indeed, is delayed a little too long, to my impatience, at least, it seems so, who find the spring, backward as it is, too forward, because many of its beauties will have faded before you will have an opportunity to see them. We took our customary walk yesterday in the wilderness at Weston, and saw, with regret, the laburnums, syringas, and guelder-roses, some of them blown, and others just upon the point of blowing, and could not help observing—all these will be gone before Lady Hesketh comes. Still, however, there will be roses, and jasmine, and honey-suckle, and shady walks, and cool alcoves, and you will partake them with us. But I want you to have a share of every thing that is delightful here, and cannot bear that the advance of the season should steal away a single pleasure before you can come to enjoy it.



Every day I think of you, and almost all the day long; I will venture to say that even *you* were never so expected in your life. I called last week at the Quaker's to see the furniture of your bed, the fame of which had reached me. It is, I assure you, superb, of printed cotton, and the subject classical. Every morning you will open your eyes on Phæton kneeling to Apollo, and imploring his father to grant him the conduct of his chariot for a day. May your sleep be as sound as your bed will be sumptuous, and your nights, at least, will be well provided for.

I shall send up the sixth and seventh books of the Iliad shortly, and shall address them to you. You will forward them to the General. I long to show you my workshop, and to see you sitting on the opposite side of my table. We shall be as close packed as two wax figures in an old-fashioned picture-frame. I am writing in it now. It is the place in which I fabricate all my verse in summer time. I rose an hour sooner than usual this morning, that I might finish my sheet before breakfast, for I must write this day to the General.

The grass under my windows is all bespangled with dew-drops, and the birds are singing in the apple-trees among the blossoms. Never poet had a more commodious oratory in which to invoke his muse:

I have made your heart ache too often, my poor dear cousin, with talking about my fits of dejection. Something has happened that has led me to the subject, or I would have mentioned them more sparingly. Do not suppose or suspect that I treat you with reserve; there is nothing in which I am concerned that you shall not be made acquainted with. But the tale is too long for a letter. I will only add for your present satisfaction, that the cause is not exterior, that it is not within the reach of human aid, and that yet I have a hope myself, and Mrs. Unwin a strong persuasion, of its removal. I am indeed even now, and have been for a considerable time, sensible of a change for the better, and expect with good reason, a comfortable lift from you. Guess, then, my beloved cousin, with what wishes I look forward to the time of your arrival, from whose coming I promise myself not only pleasure, but peace of mind, at least an additional share of it. At present it is an uncertain and transient guest with me, but the joy with which I shall see and converse with you at Olney may, perhaps, make it an abiding one.

W. C.

## LETTER LVII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*Olney, June 4 & 5, 1786.*

Ah! my cousin, you begin already to fear and quake. What a hero am I, compared with you! I have no fears of *you*: on the contrary, am as bold as a lion. I wish that your carriage were even now at the door: you should soon see with how much courage I would face you. But what cause have you for fear? Am I not your cousin, with whom you have wandered in the fields of Freemantle, and at Bevis's Mount? Who used to read to you, to laugh with you, till our sides have ached, at any thing, or nothing? And am I, in these respects, at all altered? You will not find me so, but just as ready to laugh and to wander as you ever knew me. A cloud, perhaps, may come over me now and then for a few hours, but from clouds I was never exempted. And are not you the identical cousin with whom I have performed all these feats? The very Harriet whom I saw, for the first time, at De Grey's, in Norfolk-street? (It was on a Sunday, when you came with my uncle and aunt to drink tea there, and I had dined there, and was just going back to Westminster.) If these things are so, and I am sure that you cannot gainsay a syllable of them all, then this consequence follows; that I do not promise myself more pleasure from your company than I shall be sure to find. Then you are my cousin, in whom I always delighted, and in whom I doubt not that I shall delight, even to my latest hour. But this wicked coach-maker has sunk my spirits. What a miserable thing it is to depend, in any degree, for the accomplishment of a wish, and that wish so fervent, on the punctuality of a creature who, I suppose, was never punctual in his life! Do tell him, my dear, in order to quicken him, that if he performs his promise he shall make my coach when I want one, and that if he performs it not, I will most assuredly employ some other man.

The Throckmortons sent a note to invite us to dinner—we went, and a very agreeable day we had. They made no fuss with us, which I was heartily glad to see, for where I give trouble I am sure that I cannot be welcome. Themselves, and their chaplain, and we, were all the party. After dinner we had much cheerful and pleasant talk, the particulars of which might not, perhaps, be so entertaining upon paper; therefore, all but one I will omit, and that I will mention only because it will of itself be sufficient to give you an insight into their opinion on a very important subject—their own religion. I happened to say, that in all profes-



sions and trades mankind affected an air of mystery. Physicians, I observed, in particular, were objects of that remark, who persist in prescribing in Latin, many times, no doubt, to the hazard of a patient's life, through the ignorance of an apothecary. Mr. Throckmorton assented to what I said, and turning to his chaplain, to my infinite surprize, observed to him, "*That is just as absurd as our praying in Latin.*" I could have hugged him for his liberality and freedom from bigotry, but thought it rather more decent to let the matter pass without any visible notice. I therefore heard it with pleasure, and kept my pleasure to myself. The two ladies, in the mean time, were tete-a-tete in the drawing-room. Their conversation turned principally (as I afterwards learned from Mrs. Unwin) on a most delightful topic, viz. myself. In the first place, Mrs. Throckmorton admired my book, from which she quoted by heart more than I could repeat, though I so lately wrote it. In short, my dear, I cannot proceed to relate what she said of the book, and the book's author, for that abominable modesty that I cannot even yet get rid of. Let it suffice to say, that you, who are disposed to love every body who speaks kindly of your cousin, will certainly love Mrs. Throckmorton, when you shall be told what she said of him, and that you *will* be told is equally certain, because it depends on Mrs. Unwin. It is a very convenient thing to have a Mrs. Unwin, who will tell you many a good and long story for me, that I am not able to tell for myself. I am, however, not at all in arrears to my neighbours in the matter of admiration and esteem, but the more I know, the more I like them, and have nearly an affection for them both. I am delighted that the Task has so large a share of the approbation of your sensible Suffolk friend.

I received yesterday, from the General, another letter of T. S. an unknown auxiliary having started up in my behalf. I believe I shall leave the business of answering to him, having no leisure myself for controversy. He lies very open to a very effectual reply.

My dearest cousin, adieu! I hope to write to you but once more before we meet. But Oh! this coach-maker, and Oh! this holiday week!

Yours, with impatient desire to see you,

W. C.

## LETTER LVIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

*Olney, June 9, 1786,*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The little time that I can devote to any other purpose than that of poetry is, as you may suppose, stolen. Homer is urgent. Much is done, but much remains undone, and no school-boy is more attentive to the performance of his daily task than I am. You will therefore excuse me, if at present I am both unfrequent and short.

The paper tells me that the Chancellor has relapsed, and I am truly sorry to hear it. The first attack was dangerous, but a second must be more formidable still. It is not probable that I should ever hear from him again, if he survive; yet, of the much that I should have felt for him, had our connection never been interrupted, I still feel much. Every body will feel the loss of a man whose abilities have made him of such general importance.

I correspond again with Colman, and upon the most friendly footing, and find in his instance, and in some others, that an intimate intercourse which has been only casually suspended, not forfeited on either side by outrage, is capable not only of revival, but improvement.

I had a letter some time since that gave me great pleasure, from your sister Fanny. Such notices from old friends are always pleasant, and of such pleasures I have received many lately. They refresh the remembrance of early days, and make me young again. The noble institution of the Nonsense Club will be forgotten when we are gone, who composed it; but I often think of your most heroic line, written at one of our meetings, and especially think of it when I am translating Homer—

“To whom replied the Devil yard-long-tail'd.”

There never was any thing more truly Grecian than that triple epithet, and were it possible to introduce it into either Iliad or Odyssey, I should certainly steal it.

I am now flushed with expectation of Lady Hesketh, who spends the summer with us. We hope to see her next week. We have found admirable lodgings both for her and her suite, and a Quaker in this town, still more admirable than they, who, as if he loved her as much as I do, furnishes them for her with real elegance.

W. C.

## LETTER LIX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

*Olney, June 9, 1786.*

My dear cousin's arrival has, as it could not fail to do, made us happier than we ever were at Olney. Her great kindness in giving us her company is a cordial that I shall feel the effect of, not only while she is here, but while I live.

Olney will not be much longer the place of our habitation. At a village, two miles distant, we have hired a house of Mr. Throckmorton, a much better than we occupy at present, and yet not more expensive. It is situated very near to our most agreeable landlord, and his agreeable pleasure grounds. In him, and in his wife, we shall find such companions as will always make the time pass pleasantly while they are in the country, and his grounds will afford us good air, and good walking room in the winter; two advantages which we have not enjoyed at Olney, where I have no neighbour with whom I can converse, and where, seven months in the year, I have been imprisoned by dirty and impassable ways, till both my health and Mrs. Unwin's have suffered materially.

Homer is ever importunate, and will not suffer me to spend half the time with my distant friends that I would gladly give them.

W. C.

## LETTER LX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

*Olney, Oct. 6, 1786.*

You have not heard, I suppose, that the ninth book of my translation is at the bottom of the Thames. But it is even so. A storm overtook it in its way to Kingston, and it sunk, together with the whole cargo of the boat in which it was a passenger. Not figuratively foreshowing, I hope, by its submersion, the fate of all the rest. My kind and generous cousin, who leaves nothing undone that she thinks can conduce to my comfort, encouragement, or convenience, is my transcriber also. *She* wrote the copy, and *she* will have to write it again—*Hers*, therefore, is the damage. I have a thousand reasons to lament that the time approaches when we must lose her. She has made a winterly summer a most delightful one, but the winter itself we must spend without her.

W. C.

The letters which I have just imparted to my reader exhibit a picture so minute and so admirable, of the life, the studies, and the affections of Cowper, during the period to which they relate, that they require no comment from his biographer. They must render all who read them intimately acquainted with the writer, and the result of such intimacy must be, what it is at once my duty and my delight to promote, an increase of public affection for his enchanting character, an effect which all his posthumous compositions are excellently suited to extend and confirm.

It is now incumbent on me to relate the consequences of a visit, so fondly expected by the poet, and happily productive of a change in his local situation.

It does not always happen, when the heart and fancy have indulged themselves with such fervency in a prospect of delight, from the renewed society of a long absent friend, it does not always happen, that the pleasure, on its arrival, proves exactly what it promised to be on its approach. But in the present case, to the honour of the two friends concerned, the delightful vision was followed by a reality of delight. Cowper was truly happy in receiving and settling his beloved, though long unseen relation, as his neighbour: she was comfortably lodged in the vicarage of Olney, a mansion so near to his residence, and so commodious from the private communication between their two houses, that the long separated and most seasonably re-united friends here enjoyed all the easy intercourse of a domestic union.

Cowper derived from this fortunate event not only the advantage of daily conversation with another cultivated mind, in affectionate unison with his own, but, as his new neighbour had brought her carriage and horses to Olney, he was gradually tempted to survey, in a wider range, the face of a country that he loved, and to mix a little more with its most worthy inhabitants. His life had been so retired at Olney that he had not even extended his excursions to the neighbouring town of Newport-Pagnell, in the course of many years; but the convenience of a carriage induced him, in August, to visit Mr. Bull, who resided there; the friend to whose assiduous attention he had felt himself much obliged in a season of mental depression. A few letters of Cowper to this gentleman are so expressive of cordial esteem, and so agreeably illustrate the character of each, that I shall take this opportunity of making a short selection from the private papers, of which the kindness of the person to whom they are addressed has enabled me to avail myself. When Cowper published the first volume of his poems, Mr. Bull wrote to him on the occasion. The answer of the poet, March 24, 1782, I reserve for a future



part of my work. A subsequent letter, dated October 27th, in the same year, opens with this lively paragraph:—

“ Mon aimable and très cher Ami,

“ It is not in the power of chaises, or chariots, to carry you where my affections will not follow you: if I heard that you were gone to finish your days in the moon, I should not love you the less; but should contemplate the place of your abode as often as it appeared in the Heavens, and say, Farewell, my friend, for ever! Lost, but not forgotten! Live happy in thy lantern, and smoke the remainder of thy pipes in peace! Thou art rid of earth, at least of all its cares, and so far can I rejoice in thy removal; and as to the cares that are to be found in the moon, I am resolved to suppose them lighter than those below—heavier they can hardly be.”

The letter closes with a sentence that ascertains the date of those translations from the poetry of Madame Guion which I have already mentioned, as executed at the request of Mr. Bull. “ Madame Guion is finished, but not quite transcribed.” In a subsequent letter he speaks of these and of other poems. I transcribe the passage, and a preceding paragraph, in which he expatiates on thunder storms with the feelings of a poet, and with his usual felicity of expression. “ I was always an admirer of thunder storms, even before I knew whose voice I heard in them; but especially an admirer of thunder rolling over the great waters. There is something singularly majestic in the sound of it at sea, where the eye and the ear have uninterrupted opportunity of observation, and the concavity above being made spacious, reflects it with more advantage. I have consequently envied you your situation, and the enjoyment of those refreshing breezes that belong to it. We have, indeed, been regaled with some of these bursts of ætherial music. The peals have been as loud, by the report of a gentleman who lived many years in the West-Indies, as were ever heard in those islands, and the flashes as splendid: but when the thunder preaches, an horizon bounded by the ocean is the only sounding-board.”

“ I have had but little leisure, strange as it may seem, and that little I devoted for a month after your departure to Madame Guion. I have made fair copies of all the pieces I have produced on this last occasion, and will put them into your hands when we meet. They are yours, to serve you as you please: you may take and leave as you like, for my purpose is already served; they have amused me, and I have no further demand upon them: The lines upon Friendship, however, which were not sufficiently of a piece



with the others, will not now be wanted. I have some other little things, which I will communicate, when time shall serve; but I cannot now transcribe them."

What the author here modestly calls "The Lines on Friendship," I regard as one of the most admirable among his minor poems. Mr. Bull, who has been induced to print the translations from Madame Guion, by an apprehension of their being surreptitiously and inaccurately published, has inserted these stanzas on Friendship, in the little volume that he has recently imparted to the public from the press of Newport-Pagnell; but as the poem is singularly beautiful, and seems to have been re-touched by its author, with an attention proportioned to its merit, I shall introduce it here in a corrected state, and notice such variations as I find in the two copies before me.

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### ON FRIENDSHIP.

*Amicitia nisi inter bonos esse non potest.* CICERO.

#### 1.

What virtue can we name, or grace,  
 But men unqualified and base  
 Will boast it their possession?  
 Profusion apes the noble part  
 Of liberality of heart,  
 And dulness of discretion.

#### 2.

But as the gem of richest cost  
 Is ever counterfeited most;  
 So always imitation  
 Employs the utmost skill she can  
 To counterfeit the faithful man,  
 The friend of long duration.

---

### VARIATIONS.

I.—1. What virtue, or what mental grace,

II.— If ev'ry polish'd gem we find,  
 Illuminating heart or mind,  
 Provoke to imitation,  
 No wonder friendship does the same,  
 That jewel of the purest flame,  
 Or rather constellation.

3.

Some will pronounce me too severe,  
 But long experience speaks me clear,  
     Therefore, that censure scorning,  
 I will proceed to mark the shelves  
 On which so many dash themselves,  
     And give the simple warning.

4.

Youth, unadmonish'd by a guide,  
 Will trust to any fair outside—  
     An error soon corrected!  
 For who but learns, with riper years,  
 That man, when smoothest he appears,  
     Is most to be suspected?

5.

But here again a danger lies;  
 Lest, thus deluded by our eyes,  
     And taking trash for treasure,  
 We should, when undeceiv'd, conclude  
 Friendship imaginary good,  
     A mere Utopian pleasure.

6.

An acquisition rather rare  
 Is yet no subject of despair:  
     Nor should it seem distressful,  
 If either on forbidden ground,  
 Or where it was not to be found,  
     We sought it unsuccessful.

## VARIATIONS.

III.—No knave, but boldly will pretend  
 The requisites that form a friend,  
     A real and a sound one;  
 Nor any fool he would deceive,  
 But prove as ready to believe,  
     And dream that he has found one.

IV.—1. Candid, and generous, and just,  
 2. Boys care but little whom they trust.

V.—2. Lest, having misemploy'd our eyes,  
 4. We should unwarily conclude  
 5. Friendship a false ideal good.

VI.—3. Nor is it wise complaining,  
 6. We sought without attaining.

7.

No friendship will abide the test  
That stands on sordid interest  
    And mean self-love erected;  
Nor such, as may awhile subsist  
'Twixt sensualist and sensualist,  
    For vicious ends connected.

8.

Who hopes a friend, should have a heart  
Himself, well furnish'd for the part,  
    And ready, on occasion,  
To show the virtue that he seeks;  
For 'tis an union that bespeaks  
    A just reciprocation.

9.

A fretful temper will divide  
The closest knot that may be tied,  
    By ceaseless sharp corrosion:  
A temper passionate and fierce  
May suddenly your joys disperse  
    At one immense explosion.

## VARIATIONS.

VII.—5. Between the sot and sensualist.

VIII.—Who seeks a friend, should come dispos'd  
T' exhibit, in full bloom disclos'd,  
    The graces and the beauties  
That form the character he seeks,  
For 'tis an union that bespeaks  
    Reciprocated duties.

Mutual attention is implied,  
And equal truth on either side,  
    And constantly supported:  
'Tis senseless arrogance t' accuse  
Another of sinister views,  
    Our own as much distorted.

But will sincerity suffice?  
It is, indeed, above all price,  
    And must be made the basis;  
But ev'ry virtue of the soul  
Must constitute the charming whole,  
    All shining in their places.

10.

In vain the talkative unite  
 With hope of permanent delight:  
     The secret just committed  
 They drop, through mere desire to prate,  
 Forgetting its important weight,  
     And by themselves outwitted.

11.

How bright soe'er the prospect seems,  
 All thoughts of friendship are but dreams,  
     If envy chance to creep in.  
 An envious man, if you succeed,  
 May prove a dang'rous foe indeed,  
     But not a friend worth keeping.

12.

As envy pines at good possess'd,  
 So jealousy looks forth distress'd,  
     On good that seems approaching;  
 And, if success his steps attend,  
 Discerns a rival in a friend,  
     And hates him for encroaching.

13.

Hence authors of illustrious name,  
 Unless belied by common fame,  
     Are sadly prone to quarrel!  
 To deem the wit a friend displays  
 So much of loss to their own praise,  
     And pluck each other's laurel.

14.

A man, renown'd for repartee,  
 Will seldom scruple to make free  
     With friendship's finest feeling;  
 Will thrust a dagger at your breast,  
 And tell you, 'twas a special jest,  
     By way of balm for healing.

15.

Beware of tattlers! keep your ear  
 Close stopt against the tales they bear,  
     Fruits of their own invention!

## VARIATIONS.

XIV.—5. And say he wounded you in jest.

The separation of chief friends  
Is what their kindness most intends;  
Their sport is your dissension.

16.

Friendship, that wantonly admits  
A joco-serious play of wits  
In brilliant altercation,  
Is union such as indicates,  
Like hand-in-hand insurance plates,  
Danger of conflagration.

17.

Some fickle creatures boast a soul  
True as the needle to the pole;  
Yet shifting like the weather,  
The needle's constancy forego  
For any novelty, and show  
Its variations rather.

18.

Insensibility makes some  
Unseasonably deaf and dumb,  
When most you need their pity.  
'Tis waiting till the tears shall fall  
From Gog and Magog in Guildhall,  
Those playthings of the city.\*

## VARIATIONS.

XV.—Who keeps an open ear  
For tattlers, will be sure to hear  
The trumpet of invention.  
Aspersion is the babbler's trade,  
To listen is to lend him aid,  
And rush into contention.

XVI.—1. A friendship, that in frequent fits  
Of controversial rage emits  
The sparks of disputation.

XVII.—3. Their humour yet so various,  
They manifest their whole life through  
The needle's deviation too;  
Their love is so precarious.

\* This was written before the removal of them.



19.

The great and small but rarely meet  
On terms of amity complete.

Th' attempt would scarce be madder,  
Should any, from the bottom, hope  
At one huge stride to reach the top  
Of an erected ladder.

20.

Courtier and patriot cannot mix  
Their het'rogenous politics  
Without an effervescence,  
Such as of salts with lemon-juice,  
But which is rarely known t' induce,  
Like that, a coalescence.

21.

Religion should extinguish strife,  
And make a calm of human life.  
But even those who differ  
Only on topics left at large,  
How fiercely will they meet and charge!  
No combatants are stiffer.

22.

To prove, alas! my main intent,  
Needs no great cost of argument,  
No cutting and contriving.

## VARIATIONS.

- XIX.—3. Plebeians must surrender,  
And yield so much to noble folk,  
It is combining fire with smoke,  
Obscurity with splendour.  
Some are so placid and serene  
(As Irish bogs are always green),  
They sleep secure from waking,  
And are, indeed, a bog that bears  
Your unparticipated cares  
Unmov'd, and without quaking.
- XX.—4. Like that of salts with lemon-juice,  
Which does not yet like that produce  
A friendly coalescence.
- XXI.—4. On points which God has left at large,
- XXII.—1. To prove at last my main intent  
Needs no expense of argument.

Seeking a real friend, we seem  
 T' adopt the chemist's golden dream,  
 With still less hope of thriving.

23.

Then judge, before you choose your man,  
 As circumspectly as you can;  
 And, having made election,  
 See that no disrespect of yours,  
 Such as a friend but ill endures,  
 Enfeeble his affection.

24.

It is not timber, lead and stone,  
 An architect requires alone  
 To finish a great building;  
 The palace were but half complete,  
 Could he by any chance forget  
 The carving and the gilding.

25.

As similarity of mind,  
 Or something not to be defin'd,  
 First rivets our attention;

## VARIATIONS.

Sometimes the fault is all your own,  
 Some blemish in due time made known  
 By trespass or omission:  
 Sometimes occasion brings to light  
 Our friend's defect, long hid from sight,  
 And even from suspicion.

XXIII.—1. Then judge yourself, and prove your man.

4. Beware no negligence of yours.

That secrets are a sacred trust,  
 That friends should be sincere and just,  
 That constancy befits them,  
 Are observations on the case,  
 That savour much of common-place,  
 And all the world admits them.

XXIV.—1. But 'tis not timber, lead and stone.

3. To finish a fine building.

5. If he could possibly forget:

XXV.—3. First fixes our attention.

So manners decent and polite,  
The same we practis'd at first sight,  
Must save it from declension.

26.

The man who hails you Tom or Jack,  
And proves, by thumping on your back,  
His sense of your great merit,  
Is such a friend that one had need  
Be very much his friend indeed,  
To pardon or to bear it.

27.

Some friends make this their prudent plan—  
Say little, and hear all you can—  
Safe policy, but hateful!  
So barren sands imbibe the show'r,  
But render neither fruit nor flow'r—  
Unpleasant and ungrateful.

28.

They whisper trivial things, and small;  
But to communicate at all  
Things serious, deem improper.  
Their feculence and froth they show,  
But keep their best contents below,  
Just like a simm'ring copper.

29.

These samples (for, alas! at last  
These are but samples, and a taste  
Of evils yet unmention'd)

## VARIATIONS.

XXVI.—1. The man that hails you Tom or Jack,  
And proves, by thumps upon your back,  
How he esteems your merit.

XXVII.—1. Some act upon this prudent plan.

XXVIII.—The man I trust, if shy to me,  
Shall find me as reserv'd as he:  
No subterfuge or pleading  
Shall win my confidence again;  
I will by no means entertain  
A spy on my proceeding.

XXIX.—Pursue the search, and you will find  
Good sense and knowledge of mankind.

May prove the task a task indeed,  
 In which 'tis much if we succeed,  
 However well intention'd.

30.

Pursue the theme, and you shall find  
 A disciplin'd and furnish'd mind  
 To be at least expedient;  
 And, after summing all the rest,  
 Religion ruling in the breast  
 A principal ingredient.

31.

True friendship has, in short, a grace  
 More than terrestrial in its face,  
 That proves it Heaven-descended.  
 Man's love of woman not so pure,  
 Nor when sincerest, so secure,  
 To last till life is ended.

## VARIATIONS.

The noblest friendship ever shown  
 The Saviour's history makes known,  
 Though some have turn'd and turn'd it,  
 And, whether being craz'd or blind,  
 Or seeking with a bias'd mind,  
 Have not, it seems, discern'd it.

O friendship, if my soul forego  
 Thy dear delights while here below,  
 To mortify and grieve me,  
 May I myself at last appear  
 Unworthy, base, and insincere,  
 Or may my friend deceive me!

This sprightly little poem contains the essence of all that has been said on this interesting subject, by the best writers of different countries. It is pleasing to reflect, that a man who entertained such refined ideas of friendship, and expressed them so happily, was singularly fortunate in this very important article of human life. Indeed, he was fortunate in this respect to such a degree, that Providence seems to have supplied him most unexpectedly, at different periods of his troubled existence, with exactly such friends as the peculiar exigences of his situation required. The truth of this remark is exemplified in the seasonable assistance that his tender spirits derived from the kindness of Mrs. Unwin, at Hun-

tingdon; of Lady Austen, and Lady Hesketh, at Olney, and of his young kinsman in Norfolk, who will soon attract the notice and obtain the esteem of my reader, as the affectionate superintendent of Cowper's declining days. To the honour of human nature, and of the present times, it will appear, that a sequestered poet, pre-eminent in genius and calamity, was beloved and assisted by his friends of both sexes, with a purity of zeal, and an inexhaustible ardour of affection, more resembling the friendship of the heroic ages, than the precarious attachments of the modern world,

The visit of Lady Hesketh, to Olney, led to a very favourable change in the residence of Cowper. He had now passed nineteen years in a scene that was far from suiting him. The house he inhabited looked on a market-place, and once, in a season of illness, he was so apprehensive of being incommoded by the bustle of a fair, that he requested to lodge, for a single night, under the roof of his friend, Mr. Newton; and he was tempted, by the more comfortable situation of the vicarage, to remain fourteen months in the house of his benevolent neighbour. His intimacy with this venerable Divine was so great, that Mr. Newton has described it in the following remarkable terms, in *Memoirs of the Poet*, which affection induced him to begin, but which the troubles and infirmities of very advanced life have obliged him to relinquish.

“For nearly twelve years we were seldom separated for seven hours at a time, when we were awake, and at home:—The first six I passed in daily admiring, and aiming to imitate him: during the second six, I walked pensively with him in the valley of the shadow of death.”

Mr. Newton records, with a becoming satisfaction, the evangelical charity of his friend: “He loved the poor,” says his devout Memorialist: “He often visited them in their cottages, conversed with them in the most condescending manner, sympathized with them, counselled and comforted them in their distresses; and those who were seriously disposed were often cheered and animated by his prayers!”—After the removal of Mr. Newton to London, and the departure of Lady Austen, Olney had no particular attractions for Cowper; and Lady Hesketh was happy in promoting the project, which had occurred to him, of removing with Mrs. Unwin, to the near and pleasant village of Weston. A scene highly favourable to his health and amusement! For, with a very comfortable mansion, it afforded him a garden, and a field of considerable extent, which he delighted to cultivate and embellish. With these he had advantages still more desirable—easy, perpetual access to the spacious and tranquil pleasure grounds of his accomplished and benevolent landlord, Mr. Throckmorton,



whose neighbouring house supplied him with society peculiarly suited to his gentle and delicate spirit.

He removed from Olney to Weston in November, 1786. The course of his life in his new situation (the spot most pleasing to his fancy) will be best described by the subsequent series of his letters to that amiable relation to whom he considered himself as particularly indebted for this improvement in his domestic scenery. With these I shall occasionally connect a selection of his letters to particular friends, and particularly the letters addressed to one of his most intimate correspondents, who happily commenced an acquaintance with the poet in the beginning of the year 1787. I add with pleasure the name of Mr. Rose, the Barrister, whose friendship I was so fortunate as to share, by meeting him at Weston in a subsequent period, and whom I instantly learnt to regard by finding that he held very justly a place of the most desirable distinction in the heart of Cowper.

#### LETTER LXI.

To Lady HESKETH

*Weston Lodge, Nov. 26, 1786.*

It is my birth-day, my beloved cousin, and I determine to employ a part of it, that it may not be destitute of festivity, in writing to you. The dark thick fog that has obscured it would have been a burthen to me at Olney, but here I have hardly attended to it. The neatness and snugness of our abode compensates all the dreariness of the season, and whether the ways are wet or dry, our house at least is always warm and commodious. Oh! for you, my cousin, to partake these comforts with us! I will not begin already to tease you upon that subject, but Mrs. Unwin remembers to have heard from your own lips, that you hate London in the spring. Perhaps, therefore, by that time, you may be glad to escape from a scene, which will be every day growing more disagreeable, that you may enjoy the comforts of the Lodge. You well know, that the best house has a desolate appearance unfurnished. This house, accordingly, since it has been occupied by us, and our *Meubles*, is as much superior to what it was when you saw it, as you can imagine. The parlour is even elegant. When I say that the parlour is elegant, I do not mean to insinuate that the study is not so. It is neat, warm, and silent, and a much better study than I deserve, if I do not produce in it an incomparable translation of Homer. I think every day of those lines of Milton, and congratulate myself on having obtained, before I am quite superannuated, what he seems not to have hoped for sooner.

“ And may at length my weary age  
 “ Find out the peaceful hermitage!”

For if it is not a hermitage, at least it is a much better thing; and you must always understand, my dear, that when poets talk of cottages, hermitages, and such like things, they mean a house with six sashes in front, two comfortable parlours, a smart stair-case, and three bed-chambers of convenient dimensions; in short, exactly such a house as this.

The Throckmortons continue the most obliging neighbours in the world. One morning last week they both went with me to the Cliffs—a scene, my dear, in which you would delight beyond measure, but which you cannot visit except in the spring or autumn. The heat of summer, and the clinging dirt of winter, would destroy you. What is called the Cliff, is no cliff, nor at all like one, but a beautiful terrace, sloping gently down to the Ouse, and from the brow of which, though not lofty, you have a view of such a valley as makes that which you see from the hills near Olney, and which I have had the honour to celebrate, an affair of no consideration.

Wintry as the weather is, do not suspect that it confines me. I ramble daily, and every day change my ramble. Wherever I go, I find short grass under my feet, and when I have travelled, perhaps, five miles, come home with shoes not at all too dirty for a drawing-room. I was pacing yesterday under the elms that surround the field in which stands the great alcove, when, lifting my eyes, I saw two black genteel figures bolt through a hedge into the path where I was walking. You guess already who they were, and that they could be nobody but our neighbours. They had seen me from a hill at a distance, and had traversed a great turnip-field to get at me. You see, therefore, my dear, that I am in some request. Alas! in too much request with some people. The verses of Cadwallader have found me at last.

I am charmed with your account of our little cousin\* at Kensington. If the world does not spoil him hereafter, he will be a valuable man.

Good night, and may God bless thee.

W. C.

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LETTER LXII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, Dec. 4, 1786.*

I sent you, my dear, a melancholy letter, and I do not know that I shall now send you one very unlike it.

\* Lord Cowper.

Not that any thing occurs, in consequence of our late loss, more afflictive than was to be expected, but the mind does not perfectly recover its tone after a shock like that which has been felt so lately. This I observe, that though my experience has long since taught me that this world is a world of shadows, and that it is the more prudent, as well as the more Christian course, to possess the comforts that we find in it as if we possessed them not, it is no easy matter to reduce this doctrine into practice. We forget that that God who gave it may, when he pleases, take it away; and that, perhaps, it may please him to take it at a time when we least expect it, or are least disposed to part from it. Thus it has happened in the present case. There never was a moment in Unwin's life when there seemed to be more urgent want of him than the moment in which he died. He had attained to an age when, if they are at any time useful, men become more useful to their families, their friends, and the world. His parish began to feel, and to be sensible of the advantages of his ministry. The clergy around him were many of them awed by his example. His children were thriving under his own tuition and management, and his eldest boy is likely to feel his loss severely, being, by his years, in some respect qualified to understand the value of such a parent; by his literary proficiency—too clever for a school-boy, and too young, at the same time, for the university. The removal of a man in the prime of life, of such a character, and with such connections, seems to make a void in society that never can be filled. God seemed to have made him just what he was, that he might be a blessing to others, and when the influence of his character and abilities began to be felt, removed him. These are mysteries, my dear, that we cannot contemplate without astonishment, but which will, nevertheless, be explained hereafter, and must, in the mean time, be revered in silence. It is well for his mother that she has spent her life in the practice of an habitual acquiescence in the dispensations of Providence, else I know that this stroke would have been heavier, after all that she has suffered upon another account, than she could have borne. She derives, as she well may, great consolation from the thought, that he lived the life and died the death of a Christian. The consequence is, if possible, more unavoidable than the most mathematical conclusion, that therefore he is happy. So farewell, my friend Unwin! the first man for whom I conceived a friendship after my removal from St. Alban's, and for whom I cannot but still continue to feel a friendship, though I shall see thee with these eyes no more.

## LETTER LXIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*Weston, Dec. 9, 1786.*

I am perfectly sure that you are mistaken, though I do not wonder at it, considering the singular nature of the event, in the judgment that you form of poor Unwin's death, as it affects the interests of his intended pupil. When a tutor was wanted for him, you sought out the wisest and best man for the office within the circle of your connections. It pleased God to take him home to himself. Men eminently wise and good are very apt to die, because they are fit to do so. You found in Unwin a man worthy to succeed him, and He, in whose hands are the issues of life and death, seeing, no doubt, that Unwin was ripe for a removal into a better state, removed him also. The matter, viewed in this light, seems not so wonderful as to refuse all explanation, except such as, in a melancholy moment, you have given to it. And I am so convinced that the little boy's destiny had no influence at all in hastening the death of his tutors elect, that were it not impossible, on more accounts than one, that I should be able to serve him in that capacity, I would, without the least fear of dying a moment the sooner, offer myself to that office; I would even do it, were I conscious of the same fitness for another and better state that I believe them to have been both endowed with. In that case, I, perhaps, might die too, but if I should, it would not be on account of that connection. Neither, my dear, had your interference in the business any thing to do with the catastrophe. Your whole conduct in it must have been acceptable in the sight of God, as it was directed by principles of the purest benevolence.

I have not touched Homer to-day. Yesterday was one of my terrible seasons, and when I arose this morning I found that I had not sufficiently recovered myself to engage in such an occupation. Having letters to write, I the more willingly gave myself a dispensation. Good night.

W. C.

## LETTER LXIV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

*Weston, Dec. 9, 1786.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We had just begun to enjoy the pleasantness of our new situation, to find, at least, as much comfort in it



as the season of the year would permit, when affliction found us out in our retreat, and the news reached us of the death of Mr. Unwin. He had taken a western tour with Mr. Henry Thornton, and in his return, at Winchester, was seized with a putrid fever, which sent him to his grave. He is gone to it, however, though young, as fit for it as age itself could have made him. Regretted, indeed, and always to be regretted by those who knew him, for he had every thing that makes a man valuable both in his principles and in his manners, but leaving still this consolation to his surviving friends, that he was desirable in this world chiefly because he was so well prepared for a better.

I find myself here situated exactly to my mind. Weston is one of the prettiest villages in England, and the walks about it at all seasons of the year delightful. I know that you will rejoice with me in the change that we have made, and for which I am altogether indebted to Lady Hesketh. It is a change as great as, to compare metropolitan things with rural, from St. Giles to Grosvenor-Square. Our house is in all respects commodious, and in some degree elegant; and I cannot give you a better idea of that which we have left, than by telling you the present candidates for it are a publican and a shoemaker.

W. C.

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LETTER LXV.

To Lady HESKETH.

*Weston, Dec. 21, 1786.*

Your welcome letter, my beloved cousin, which ought by the date to have arrived on Sunday, being by some untoward accident delayed, came not till yesterday. It came, however, and has relieved me from a thousand distressing apprehensions on your account.

The dew of your intelligence has refreshed my poetical laurels. A little praise now and then is very good for your hard-working poet, who is apt to grow languid, and perhaps careless, without it. Praise, I find, affects us as money does. The more a man gets of it, with the more vigilance he watches over and preserves it. Such, at least, is its effect on me, and you may assure yourself that I will never lose a mite of it for want of care.

I have already invited the good Padre in general terms, and he shall positively dine here next week, whether he will or not. I do not at all suspect that his kindness to Protestants has any thing insidious in it, any more than I suspect that he transcribes Homer for me with a view for my conversion. He would find that a tough piece



of business, I can tell him; for when I had no religion at all, I had yet a terrible dread of the Pope. How much more now!

I should have sent you a longer letter, but was obliged to devote my last evening to the melancholy employment of composing a Latin inscription for the tomb-stone of poor William, two copies of which I wrote out and enclosed, one to Henry Thornton and one to Mr. Newton. Homer stands by me biting his thumbs, and swears that if I do not leave off directly he will choak me with bristly Greek that shall stick in my throat for ever.

W. C.

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LETTER LXVI.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, Jan. 8, 1787.*

I have had a little nervous fever lately, my dear, that has somewhat abridged my sleep; and though I find myself better to-day than I have been since it seized me, yet I feel my head lightish, and not in the best order for writing: you will find me, therefore, perhaps, not only less alert in my manner than I usually am when my spirits are good, but rather shorter. I will, however, proceed to scribble till I find that it fatigues me, and then will do as I know you would bid me do were you here, shut up my desk, and take a walk.

The good General tells me, that in the eight first books which I have sent him, he still finds alterations and amendments necessary, of which I myself am equally persuaded; and he asks my leave to lay them before an intimate friend of his, of whom he gives a character that bespeaks him highly deserving such a trust. To this I have no objection, desiring only to make the translation as perfect as I can make it: if God grant me life and health, I would spare no labour to secure that point. The General's letter is extremely kind, and, both for matter and manner, like all the rest of his dealings with his cousin the poet.

I had a letter, also, yesterday, from Mr. Smith, member for Nottingham. Though we never saw each other, he writes to me in the most friendly terms, and interests himself much in my Homer, and in the success of my subscription. Speaking on this latter subject, he says, that my poems are read by hundreds who know nothing of my proposals, and makes no doubt that they would subscribe if they did. I have myself always thought them imperfectly, or rather insufficiently announced.

I could pity the poor woman who has been weak enough to claim my song. Such pilferings are sure to be detected. I wrote

it I know not how long, but I suppose four years ago. The rose in question was a rose given to Lady Austen by Mrs. Unwin, and the incident that suggested the subject occurred in the room in which you slept at the vicarage, which Lady Austen made her dining-room. Some time since, Mr. Bull going to London, I gave him a copy of it, which he undertook to convey to Nichols, the printer of the Gentleman's Magazine. He showed it to a Mrs. C——, who begged to copy it, and promised to send it to the printer's by her servant. Three or four months afterwards, and when I had concluded it was lost, I saw it in the Gentleman's Magazine, with my signature, W. C. Poor simpleton! she will find now, perhaps, that the Rose had a thorn, and that she has pricked her fingers with it. Adieu! my beloved cousin.

W. C.

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LETTER LXVII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, Jan. 8, 1787.*

I have been so much indisposed with the fever that I told you had seized me, my nights during the whole week may be said to have been almost sleepless. The consequence has been, that except the translation of about thirty lines at the conclusion of the 13th book, I have been forced to abandon Homer entirely. This was a sensible mortification to me, as you may suppose, and felt the more, because my spirits, of course, failing with my strength, I seemed to have peculiar need of my old amusement; it seemed hard, therefore, to be forced to resign it just when I wanted it most. But Homer's battles cannot be fought by a man who does not sleep well, and who has not some little degree of animation in the day-time. Last night, however, quite contrary to my expectations, the fever left me entirely, and I slept quietly, soundly, and long. If it please God that it return not, I shall soon find myself in a condition to proceed. I walk constantly, that is to say, Mrs. Unwin and I together; for at these times I keep her continually employed, and never suffer her to be absent from me many minutes. She gives me all her time and all her attention, and forgets that there is another object in the world.

Mrs. Carter thinks on the subject of dreams as every body else does, that is to say, according to her own experience. She has had no extraordinary ones, and therefore accounts them only the ordinary operations of the fancy. Mine are of a texture that will not suffer me to ascribe them to so inadequate a cause, or to any cause but the operation of an exterior agency. I have a mind, my

dear, (and to you I will venture to boast of it) as free from superstition as any man living; neither do I give heed to dreams in general as predictive, though particular dreams I believe to be so. Some very sensible persons, and I suppose Mrs. Carter among them, will acknowledge that in old times God spoke by dreams, but affirm, with much boldness, that he has since ceased to do so. If you ask them why, they answer, because he has now revealed his will in the scripture, and there is no longer any need that he should instruct or admonish us by dreams. I grant that, with respect to doctrines and precepts, he has left us in want of nothing; but has he thereby precluded himself in any of the operations of his providence? Surely not. It is perfectly a different consideration: and the same need that there ever was of his interference in this way, there is still and ever must be while man continues blind and fallible, and a creature beset with dangers which he can neither foresee nor obviate. His operations, however, of this kind, are, I allow, very rare; and as to the generality of dreams, they are made of such stuff, and are in themselves so insignificant, that though I believe them all to be the manufacture of others, not our own, I account it not a farthing matter who manufactures them. So much for dreams.

My fever is not yet gone, but sometimes seems to leave me. It is altogether of the nervous kind, and attended, now and then, with much dejection.

A young gentleman called here yesterday, who came six miles out of his way to see me. He was on a journey to London from Glasgow, having just left the University there. He came, I suppose, partly to satisfy his own curiosity, but chiefly, as it seemed, to bring me the thanks of some of the Scotch Professors for my two volumes. His name is Rose, an Englishman. Your spirits being good, you will derive more pleasure from this incident than I can at present, therefore I send it. Adieu.

W. C.

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LETTER LXVIII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*Weston, July 24th, 1787.*

DEAR SIR,

This is the first time I have written these six months, and nothing but the constraint of obligation could induce me to write now. I cannot be so wanting to myself as not to endeavour at least to thank you both for the visits with which you have favoured me, and the poems that you sent me. In my pre-

sent state of mind I taste nothing; nevertheless I read, partly from habit, and partly because it is the only thing that I am capable of.

I have therefore read Burns's Poems, and have read them twice: and though they be written in a language that is new to me, and many of them on subjects much inferior to the author's ability, I think them, on the whole, a very extraordinary production. He is, I believe, the only poet these kingdoms have produced in the lower rank of life since Shakspeare, I should rather say since Prior, who need not be indebted for any part of his praise to a charitable consideration of his origin, and the disadvantages under which he has laboured. It will be pity if he should not hereafter divest himself of barbarism, and content himself with writing pure English, in which he appears perfectly qualified to excel. He who can command admiration, dishonours himself if he aims no higher than to raise a laugh.

I am, dear Sir, with my best wishes for your prosperity, and with Mrs. Unwin's respects, your obliged and affectionate humble servant,

W. C.

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LETTER LXIX.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*Weston, Aug. 27, 1787.*

DEAR SIR,

I have not yet taken up the pen again, except to write to you. The little taste that I have had of your company, and your kindness in finding me out, make me wish that we were nearer neighbours, and that there were not so great a disparity in our years; that is to say, not that you were older, but that I were younger. Could we have met in early life, I flatter myself that we might have been more intimate than now we are likely to be. But you shall not find me slow to cultivate such a measure of your regard as your friends of your own age can spare me. When your route shall lie through this country, I shall hope that the same kindness which has prompted you twice to call on me, will prompt you again; and I shall be happy if, on a future occasion, I may be able to give you a more cheerful reception than can be expected from an invalid. My health and spirits are considerably improved, and I once more associate with my neighbours. My head, however, has been the worst part of me, and still continues so;—is subject to giddiness and pain, maladies very unfavourable to poetical employment: but a preparation of the bark, which I take regularly, has so far been of service to me in those respects, as to encourage in me a hope that, by perseverance in



the use of it, I may possibly find myself qualified to resume the translation of Homer.

When I cannot walk I read, and read perhaps more than is good for me. But I cannot be idle. The only mercy that I show myself in this respect is, that I read nothing that requires much closeness of application. I lately finished the perusal of a book which in former years I have more than once attacked, but never till now conquered; some other book always interfered before I could finish it. The work I mean is Barclay's *Argenis*, and if ever you allow yourself to read for mere amusement, I can recommend it to you (provided you have not already perused it) as the most amusing romance that ever was written. It is the only one, indeed, of an old date, that I ever had the patience to go through with. It is interesting in a high degree; richer in incident than can be imagined, full of surprises, which the reader never fore-stalls, and yet free from all entanglement and confusion. The style too appears to me to be such as would not dishonour Tacitus himself.

Poor Burns loses much of his deserved praise in this country, through our ignorance of his language. I despair of meeting with any Englishman who will take the pains that I have taken to understand him. His candle is bright, but shut up in a dark lantern. I lent him to a very sensible neighbour of mine, but his uncouth dialect spoiled all, and before he had half read him through, he was quite *ramfeezled*.

W. C.

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LETTER LXX.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, Aug. 30, 1787.*

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Though it costs me something to write, it would cost me more to be silent. My intercourse with my neighbours being renewed, I can no longer seem to forget how many reasons there are why you especially should not be neglected; no neighbour, indeed, but the kindest of my friends, and ere long, I hope, an inmate.

My health and spirits seem to be mending daily; to what end I know not, neither will conjecture, but endeavour, as far as I can, to be content that they do so. I use exercise, and take the air in the park and wilderness. I read much, but as yet write not. Our friends at the Hall make themselves more and more amiable in our account, by treating us rather as old friends than as friends newly



acquired. There are few days in which we do not meet, and I am now almost as much at home in their house as in our own. Mr. Throckmorton, having long since put me in possession of all his ground, has now given me possession of his library—an acquisition of great value to me, who never have been able to live without books since I first knew my letters, and who have no books of my own. By his means I have been so well supplied, that I have not yet even looked at the Lounger, for which, however, I do not forget that I am obliged to you. *His* turn comes next, and I shall probably begin him to-morrow.

Mr. George Throckmorton is at the Hall. I thought I had known these brothers long enough to have found out all their talents and accomplishments; but I was mistaken. The day before yesterday, after having walked with us, they *carried* us up to the library, (a more accurate writer would have said *conducted* us) and then they showed me the contents of an immense port-folio, the work of their own hands. It was furnished with drawings of the architectural kind, executed in a most masterly manner, and among others contained outside and inside views of the Pantheon, I mean the Roman one. They were all, I believe, made at Rome. Some men may be estimated at a first interview, but the Throckmortons must be seen often and known long before one can understand all their value.

They often inquire after you, and ask me whether you visit Weston this autumn. I answer yes, and I charge you, my dearest cousin, to authenticate my information. Write to me, and tell us when we may expect to see you. We are disappointed that we had no letter from you this morning. You will find me coated and buttoned according to your recommendation.

I write but little, because writing is become new to me; but I shall come on by degrees. Mrs. Unwin begs to be affectionately remembered to you. She is in tolerable health, which is the chief comfort here that I have to boast of.

Yours, my dearest cousin, as ever, W. C.

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LETTER LXXI.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, Sept. 4, 1787.*

MY DEAREST COZ.

Come when thou canst come, secure of being always welcome. All that is here is thine, together with the hearts of those who dwell here. I am only sorry that your journey hither is necessarily postponed beyond the time when I did

hope to have seen you—sorry too, that my uncle's infirmities are the occasion of it. But years *will* have their course and their effect: they are happiest, so far as this life is concerned, who, like him, escape those effects the longest, and who do not grow old before their time. Trouble and anguish do that for some, which only longevity does for others. A few months since I was older than your father is now; and though I have lately recovered, as Falstaff says, *some smatch of my youth*, I have but little confidence, in truth none, in so flattering a change, but expect, *when I least expect it*, to wither again. The past is a pledge for the future.

Mr. G. is here, Mrs. Throckmorton's uncle. He is lately arrived from Italy, where he has resided several years, and is so much the gentleman that it is impossible to be more so. Sensible, polite, obliging; slender in his figure, and in manner most engaging—every way worthy to be related to the Throckmortons.—I have read Savary's Travels into Egypt, Memoires du Baron de Tott, Fenn's Original Letters, the Letters of Frederick of Bohemia, and am now reading Memoires d'Henri de Lorraine, Duc de Guise. I have also read Barclay's Argenis, a Latin romance, and the best romance that was ever written. All these, together with Madan's Letters to Priestley, and several pamphlets, within these two months. So I am a great reader.

W. C.

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LETTER LXXII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, Sept. 15, 1787.*

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

On Monday last I was invited to meet your friend Miss J— at the Hall, and there we found her. Her good nature, her humorous manner, and her good sense are charming, insomuch that even I, who was never much addicted to speech-making, and who at present find myself particularly indisposed to it, could not help saying at parting, 'I am glad that I have seen you, and sorry that I have seen so little of you.' We were sometimes many in company—on Thursday we were fifteen; but we had not altogether so much vivacity and cleverness as Miss J—, whose talent at mirth-making has this rare property to recommend it, that nobody suffers by it.

I am making a gravel walk for winter use, under a warm hedge in the orchard. It shall be furnished with a low seat for your accommodation, and if you do but like it, I shall be satisfied. In wet weather, or rather after wet weather, when the street is dirty,

it will suit you well, for lying on an easy declivity, through its whole length, it must of course be immediately dry.

You are very much wished for by our friends at the Hall—how much by me I will not tell you till the second week in October.

W. C.

LETTER LXXIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

MY DEAR COZ.

*The Lodge, Sept. 29, 1787.*

I thank you for your political intelligence; retired as we are, and seemingly excluded from the world, we are not indifferent to what passes in it; on the contrary, the arrival of a newspaper, at the present juncture, never fails to furnish us with a theme for discussion, short, indeed, but satisfactory, for we seldom differ in opinion.

I have received such an impression of the Turks, from the Memoirs of Baron de Tott, which I read lately, that I can hardly help presaging the conquest of that empire by the Russians. The disciples of Mahomet are such babies in modern tactics, and so enervated by the use of their favourite drug, so fatally secure in their predestinarian dream, and so prone to a spirit of mutiny against their leaders, that nothing less can be expected. In fact, they had not been their own masters at this day, had but the Russians known the weakness of their enemies half so well as they undoubtedly know it now. Add to this, that there is a popular prophecy current in both countries, that Turkey is one day to fall under the Russian sceptre: a prophecy which, from whatever authority it be derived, as it will naturally encourage the Russians and dispirit the Turks in exact proportion to the degree of credit it has obtained on both sides, has a direct tendency to effect its own accomplishment. In the mean time, if I wish them conquered, it is only because I think it will be a blessing to them to be governed by any other hand than their own; for under Heaven has there never been a throne so execrably tyrannical as theirs. The heads of the innocent that have been cut off to gratify the humour or caprice of their tyrants, could they be all collected, and discharged against the walls of their city, would not leave one stone on another.

Oh, that you were here this beautiful day! It is too fine by half to be spent in London. I have a perpetual din in my head, and though I am not deaf, hear nothing aright, neither my own voice, nor that of others. I am under a tub, from which tub accept my best love. Yours,

W. C.

## LETTER LXXIV.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

DEAR SIR,

*Weston, Oct. 19, 1787.*

A summons from Johnson, which I received yesterday, calls my attention once more to the business of translation. Before I begin I am willing to catch, though but a short opportunity, to acknowledge your last favour. The necessity of applying myself with all diligence to a long work that has been but too long interrupted, will make my opportunities of writing rare in future.

Air and exercise are necessary to all men, but particularly so to the man whose mind labours; and to him who has been, all his life, accustomed to much of both, they are necessary in the extreme. My time, since we parted, has been devoted entirely to the recovery of health and strength for this service, and I am willing to hope with good effect. Ten months have passed since I discontinued my poetical efforts: I do not expect to find the same readiness as before, till exercise of the neglected faculty, such as it is, shall have restored it to me.

You find yourself, I hope, by this time, as comfortably situated in your new abode, as in a new abode one can be. I enter perfectly into all your feelings on occasion of the change. A sensible mind cannot do violence even to a local attachment, without much pain. When my father died I was young, too young to have reflected much. He was Rector of Berkhamstead, and there I was born. It had never occurred to me that a parson has no fee-simple in the glebe and house he occupies. There was neither tree, nor gate, nor stile, in all that country, to which I did not feel a relation, and the house itself I preferred to a palace. I was sent for from London to attend him in his last illness, and he died just before I arrived. Then, and not till then, I felt, for the first time, that I and my native place were disunited for ever. I sighed a long adieu to fields and woods, from which I once thought I should never be parted, and was at no time so sensible of their beauties as just when I left them all behind me, to return no more.

W. C.

## LETTER LXXV.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, Nov. 10, 1787.*

The parliament, my dearest cousin, prorogued continually, is a meteor dancing before my eyes, promising me my wish only to disappoint me, and none but the king and



his ministers can tell when you and I shall come together. I hope, however, that the period, though so often postponed, is not far distant, and that once more I shall behold you, and experience your power to make winter gay and sprightly.

I have a kitten, my dear, the drollest of all creatures that ever wore a cat's skin. Her gambols are not to be described, and would be incredible, if they could. In point of size she is likely to be a kitten always, being extremely small of her age; but time, I suppose, that spoils every thing, will make her also a cat. You will see her, I hope, before that melancholy period shall arrive, for no wisdom that she may gain by experience and reflection hereafter, will compensate the loss of her present hilarity. She is dressed in a tortoise-shell suit, and I know that you will delight in her.

Mrs. Throckmorton carries us to-morrow in her chaise to Chicheley. The event, however, must be supposed to depend on elements, at least on the state of the atmosphere, which is turbulent beyond measure. Yesterday it thundered; last night it lightened, and at three this morning I saw the sky as red as a city in flames could have made it. I have a leech in a bottle that foretells all these prodigies and convulsions of nature. No, not as *you* will naturally conjecture, by articulate utterance of oracular notices, but by a variety of gesticulations, which here I have not room to give an account of. Suffice it to say, that no change of weather surprises him, and that, in point of the earliest and most accurate intelligence, he is worth all the barometers in the world—none of them all, indeed, can make the least pretence to foretell thunder—a species of capacity of which he has given the most unequivocal evidence. I gave but sixpence for him, which is a groat more than the market price, though he is in fact, or rather would be, if leeches were not found in every ditch, an invaluable acquisition.

W. C.

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#### THE RETIRED CAT.\*

A poet's cat, sedate and grave,  
 As poet well could wish to have,  
 Was much addicted to inquire  
 For nooks, to which she might retire,  
 And where, secure as mouse in chink,  
 She might repose, or sit and think.

\* *Note by the Editor.*—As the Kitten mentioned in this letter was probably, in her advanced life, the heroine of a little sportive moral poem, it may be introduced perhaps not improperly here.



I know not where she caught the trick—  
 Nature perhaps herself had cast her  
 In such a mould *philosophique*,  
 Or else she learn'd it of her master.  
 Sometimes ascending debonair,  
 An apple-tree or lofty pear,  
 Lodg'd with convenience in the fork,  
 She watch'd the gard'ner at his work ;  
 Sometimes her ease and solace sought  
 In an old empty wat'ring pct,  
 There wanting nothing, save a fan,  
 To seem some nymph in her sedan,  
 Apparell'd in exactest sort,  
 And ready to be borne to court.

But love of change it seems has place  
 Not only in our wiser race ;  
 Cats also feel as well as we  
 That passion's force, and so did she.  
 Her climbing she began to find  
 Expos'd her too much to the wind,  
 And the old utensil of tin  
 Was cold and comfortless within :  
 She therefore wish'd, instead of those,  
 Some place of more serene repose,  
 Where neither cold might come, nor air  
 Too rudely wanton with her hair ;  
 And sought it in the likeliest mode  
 Within her master's snug abode.

A draw'r, it chanc'd, at bottom lin'd  
 With linen of the softest kind,  
 With such as merchants introduce  
 From India, for the lady's use ;  
 A draw'r impending o'er the rest,  
 Half open in the topmost chest,  
 Of depth enough, and none to spare,  
 Invited her to slumber there.  
 Puss, with delight beyond expression,  
 Survey'd the scene, and took possession.  
 Recumbent at her ease ere long,  
 And lull'd by her own hum-drum song,  
 She left the cares of life behind,  
 And slept as she would sleep her last ;

## LIFE OF COWPER.

When in came, housewifely inclin'd,  
 The chamber-maid, and shut it fast,  
 By no malignity impell'd,  
 But all unconscious whom it held.

Awaken'd by the shock (cried puss)  
 " Was ever cat attended thus!  
 " The open draw'r was left, I see,  
 " Merely to prove a nest for me;  
 " For soon as I was well compos'd,  
 " Then came the maid, and it was clos'd.  
 " How smooth these 'kerchiefs, and how sweet,  
 " Oh what a delicate retreat!  
 " I will resign myself to rest  
 " 'Till Sol, declining in the west,  
 " Shall call to supper; when, no doubt,  
 " Susan will come and let me out."

The evening came, the sun descended,  
 And puss remain'd still unattended.  
 The night roll'd tardily away,  
 (With her, indeed, 'twas never day),  
 The sprightly morn her course renew'd,  
 The evening grey again ensued,  
 And puss came into mind no more  
 Than if entomb'd the day before.  
 With hunger pinch'd, and pinch'd for room,  
 She now presag'd approaching doom,  
 Nor slept a single wink, or purr'd,  
 Conscious of jeopardy incurr'd.

That night, by chance, the poet watching,  
 Heard an inexplicable scratching;  
 His noble heart went pit-a-pat,  
 And to himself he said—"What's that?"  
 He drew the curtain at his side,  
 And forth he peep'd, but nothing spied.  
 Yet by his ear directed, guess'd,  
 Something imprison'd in the chest,  
 And doubtful what, with prudent care,  
 Resolv'd it should continue there.  
 At length a voice, which well he knew,  
 A long and melancholy mew,

Saluting his poetic ears,  
 Consol'd him, and dispell'd his fears;  
 He left his bed, he trod the floor,  
 He 'gan in haste the draw'rs explore,  
 The lowest first, and without stop,  
 The rest in order to the top.  
 For 'tis a truth, well known to most,  
 That whatsoever thing is lost,  
 We seek it, ere it come to light,  
 In ev'ry cranny but the right.  
 Forth skipp'd the Cat; not now replete  
 As erst with airy self-conceit,  
 Nor in her own fond apprehension,  
 A theme for all the world's attention,  
 But modest, sober, cur'd of all  
 Her notions hyperbolical,  
 And wishing for her place of rest  
 Any thing rather than a chest.  
 Then stept the poet into bed  
 With this reflection in his head.

## MORAL.

Beware of too sublime a sense  
 Of your own worth and consequence!  
 The man who dreams himself so great,  
 And his importance of such weight,  
 That all around, in all that's done,  
 Must move an act for him alone,  
 Will learn, in school of tribulation,  
 The folly of his expectation.

## LETTER LXXVI.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

*Nov.* 16, 1787.

I thank you for the solicitude that you express on the subject of my present studies. The work is undoubtedly long and laborious, but it has an end, and proceeding leisurely, with a due attention to the use of air and exercise, it is possible that I may live to finish it. Assure yourself of one thing, that though to a bystander it may seem an occupation surpassing the powers of a constitution never very athletic, and, at present, not a little the worse for wear, I can invent for myself no employment that does not exhaust my spirits more. I will not pretend to

account for this ; I will only say, that it is not the language of predilection for a favourite amusement, but that the fact is really so. I have even found that those plaything avocations which one may execute almost without any attention, fatigue me, and wear me away, while such as engage me much, and attach me closely, are rather serviceable to me than otherwise.

W. C.

LETTER LXXVII.  
To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, Nov. 27, 1787.*

It is the part of wisdom, my dearest cousin, to sit down contented under the demands of necessity, because they are such. I am sensible that you cannot, in my uncle's present infirm state, and of which it is not possible to expect any considerable amendment, indulge either us or yourself with a journey to Weston. Yourself, I say, both because I know it will give you pleasure to see *Causidice mi*\* once more, especially in the comfortable abode where you have placed him, and because, after so long an imprisonment in London, you, who love the country and have a taste for it, would of course be glad to return to it. For my own part, to me it is ever new; and though I have now been an inhabitant of this village a twelvemonth, and have, during the half of that time, been at liberty to expatiate, and to make discoveries, I am daily finding out fresh scenes and walks, which you would never be satisfied with enjoying. Some of them are unapproachable by you, either on foot or in your carriage. Had you twenty toes (whereas I suppose you have but ten) you could not reach them; and coach-wheels have never been seen there since the flood. Before it, indeed, (as Burnet says that the earth was then perfectly free from all inequalities in its surface) they might be seen there every day. We have other walks, both upon hill tops and in vallies beneath, some of which, by the help of your carriage, and many of them without its help, would be always at your command.

On Monday morning last, Sam brought me word that there was a man in the kitchen who desired to speak with me. I ordered him in. A plain, decent, elderly figure made its appearance, and being desired to sit, spoke as follows: "Sir, I am clerk of the parish of All-Saints in Northampton; brother of Mr. C. the upholsterer. It is customary for the person in my office to annex to a bill of

\* The appellation which Sir Thomas Hesketh used to give him in jest, when he was of the Temple.

mortality which he publishes at Christmas, a copy of verses. You would do me a great favour, Sir, if you would furnish me with one." To this I replied, "Mr. C. you have several men of genius in your town, why have you not applied to some of them? there is a namesake of yours in particular, C——, the statuary, who, every body knows, is a first-rate maker of verses. He surely is the man of all the world for your purpose." "Alas! Sir, I have heretofore borrowed help from him, but he is a gentleman of so much reading that the people of our town cannot understand him." I confess to you, my dear, I felt all the force of the compliment implied in this speech, and was almost ready to answer, Perhaps, my good friend, they may find me unintelligible too for the same reason. But on asking him whether he had walked over to Weston on purpose to implore the assistance of my muse, and on his replying in the affirmative, I felt my mortified vanity a little consoled, and pitying the poor man's distress, which appeared to be considerable, promised to supply him. The waggon has accordingly gone this day to Northampton, loaded, in part, with my effusions in the mortuary stile. A fig for poets who write epitaphs upon individuals! I have written *one* that serves *two hundred* persons.

A few days since I received a second very obliging letter from Mr. M——. He tells me that his own papers, which are by far, he is sorry to say it, the most numerous, are marked V. I. Z. Accordingly, my dear, I am happy to find that I am engaged in a correspondence with Mr. Viz, a gentleman for whom I have always entertained the profoundest veneration. But the serious fact is, that the papers distinguished by those signatures have ever pleased me most, and struck me as the work of a sensible man, who knows the world well, and has more of Addison's delicate humour than any body.

A poor man begged food at the Hall lately. The cook gave him some Vermicelli soup. He ladled it about some time with the spoon, and then returned it to her, saying, "I am a poor man it is true, and I am very hungry, but yet I cannot eat broth with maggots in it." Once more, my dear, a thousand thanks for your box full of good things, useful things, and beautiful things.

Ever yours,

W. C.

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LETTER LXXVIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, Dec. 4, 1787.*

I am glad, my dearest coz. that my last letter proved so diverting. You may assure yourself of the literal



truth of the whole narration, and that however droll, it was not in the least indebted to any embellishments of mine.

You say well, my dear, that in Mr. Throckmorton we have a peerless neighbour; we have so. In point of information upon all important subjects, in respect, too, of expression and address, and, in short, every thing that enters into the idea of a gentleman, I have not found his equal (not often) any where. Were I asked, who in my judgment approaches the nearest to him, in all his amiable qualities and qualifications, I should certainly answer, his brother George, who, if he be not his exact counterpart, endued with precisely the same measure of the same accomplishments, is nevertheless deficient in none of them, and is of a character singularly agreeable, in respect of a certain manly, I had almost said heroic frankness, with which his air strikes one almost immediately. So far as his opportunities have gone, he has ever been as friendly and obliging to us as we could wish him; and were he Lord of the Hall to-morrow, would, I dare say, conduct himself toward us in such a manner as to leave us as little sensible as possible of the removal of its present owners. But all this I say, my dear, merely for the sake of stating the matter as it is; not in order to obviate, or to prove the inexpediency of any future plans of yours, concerning the place of our residence. Providence and time shape every thing; I should rather say Providence alone, for time has often no hand in the wonderful changes that we experience; they take place in a moment. It is not, therefore, worth while, perhaps, to consider much what we will, or will not do in years to come, concerning which all that I can say with certainty at present is, that those years will be to me the most welcome, in which I can see the most of you.

W. C.

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LETTER LXXIX.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, Dec. 10, 1787.*

I thank you for the snip of cloth, commonly called a pattern. At present I have two coats, and but one back. If at any time hereafter I should find myself possessed of fewer coats, or more backs, it will be of use to me.

Even as you suspect, my dear, so it proved. The ball was prepared for, the ball was held, and the ball passed, and we had nothing to do with it. Mrs. Throckmorton knowing our trim, did not give us the pain of an invitation, for a pain it would have been. And why? as Sternhold says: because, as Hopkins answers, we must have refused it. But it fell out singularly enough, that this

ball was held of all days in the year, on my birth-day—and so I told them—but not till it was all over.

Though I have thought proper never to take any notice of the arrival of my MSS. together with the *other good things* in the box, yet certain it is that I received them. I have furbished up the tenth book till it is as bright as silver, and am now occupied in bestowing the same labour upon the eleventh. The twelfth and thirteenth are in the hands of —, and the fourteenth and fifteenth are ready to succeed them. This notable job is the delight of my heart, and how sorry shall I be when it is ended!

The smith and the carpenter, my dear, are both in the room hanging a bell. If I therefore make a thousand blunders, let the said intruders answer for them all.

I thank you, my dear, for your history of the G——s. What changes in that family! And how many thousand families have, in the same time, experienced changes as violent as theirs! The course of a rapid river is the justest of all emblems to express the variable-ness of our scene below. Shakspeare says, none ever bathed himself twice in the same stream; and it is equally true, that the world upon which we close our eyes at night, is never the same with that on which we open them in the morning.

I do not always say, ‘Give my love to my uncle,’ because he knows that I always love him. I do not always present Mrs. Unwin’s love to you, partly for the same reason, (deuce take the smith and the carpenter) and partly because I sometimes forget it. But to present my own I forget never, for I always have to finish my letter, which I know not how to do, my dearest coz. without telling you that I am ever yours.

W. C.

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LETTER LXXX.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*Weston, Dec. 13, 1787.*

Unless my memory deceives me, I forewarned you that I should prove a very unpunctual correspondent. The work that lies before me engages, unavoidably, my whole attention. The length of it, the spirit of it, and the exactness that is requisite to its due performance, are so many most interesting subjects of consideration to me, who find that my best attempts are only introductory to others, and that what to-day I suppose finished, to-morrow I must begin again. Thus it fares with a translator of Homer. To exhibit the majesty of such a poet in a modern language is a task that no man can estimate the difficulty of till he at-

tempts it. To paraphrase him loosely, to hang him with trappings that do not belong to him—all this is comparatively easy. But to represent him with only his own ornaments, and still to preserve his dignity, is a labour that, if I hope in any measure to achieve it, I am sensible can only be achieved by the most assiduous and most unremitting attention. Our studies, however different in themselves, in respect of the means by which they are to be successfully carried on, bear some resemblance to each other. A perseverance that nothing can discourage, a minuteness of observation that suffers nothing to escape, and a determination not to be seduced from the straight line that lies before us, by any images with which fancy may present us, are essentials that should be common to us both. There are, perhaps, few arduous undertakings that are not, in fact, more arduous than we at first supposed them. As we proceed, difficulties increase upon us, but our hopes gather strength also; and we conquer difficulties which, could we have foreseen them, we should never have had the boldness to encounter. May this be your experience, as I doubt not that it will. You possess, by nature, all that is necessary to success in the profession that you have chosen. What remains is in your own power. They say of poets that they must be born such: so must mathematicians, so must great generals, and so must lawyers, and so, indeed, must men of all denominations, or it is not possible that they should excel. But with whatever faculties we are born, and to whatever studies our genius may direct us, studies they must still be. I am persuaded that Milton did not write his *Paradise Lost*, nor Homer his *Iliad*, nor Newton his *Principia*, without immense labour. Nature gave them a bias to their respective pursuits, and that strong propensity, I suppose, is what we mean by genius. The rest they gave themselves. “*Macte esto*,” therefore, have no fears for the issue!

I have had a second kind letter from your friend Mr. —, which I have just answered. I must not, I find, hope to see him here, at least I must not much expect it. He has a family that does not permit him to fly Southward. I have also a notion that we three could spend a few days comfortably together, especially in a country like this, abounding in scenes with which I am sure you would both be delighted. Having lived till lately at some distance from the spot that I now inhabit, and having never been master of any sort of vehicle whatever, it is but just now that I begin myself to be acquainted with the beauties of our situation. To you I may hope one time or other to show them, and shall be happy to do it when an opportunity offers.

Yours, most affectionately,

W. C.

LETTER LXXXI.  
To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, Jan. 1, 1788.*

Now for another story almost incredible!

A story, that would be quite such, if it was not certain that you give me credit for any thing. I have read the poem for the sake of which you sent the paper, and was much entertained by it. You think it, perhaps, as very well you may, the only piece of that kind that was ever produced. It is indeed original, for I dare say Mr. Merry never saw mine; but certainly it is not unique. For most true it is, my dear, that ten years since, having a letter to write to a friend of mine, to whom I could write any thing, I filled a whole sheet with a composition, both in measure and in manner, precisely similar. I have in vain searched for it. It is either burnt or lost. Could I have found it, you would have had double postage to pay. For that one man in Italy, and another in England, who never saw each other, should stumble on a species of verse, in which no other man ever wrote, (and I believe that to be the case) and upon a stile and manner too, of which I suppose that neither of them had ever seen an example, appears to me so extraordinary a fact, that I must have sent you mine, whatever it had cost you, and am really vexed that I cannot authenticate the story by producing a voucher. The measure I recollect to have been perfectly the same; and as to the manner, I am equally sure of that, and from this circumstance, that Mrs. Unwin and I never laughed more at any production of mine, perhaps not even at John Gilpin. But for all this, my dear, you must, as I said, give me credit; for the thing itself is gone to that limbo of vanity, where alone, says Milton, things lost on earth are to be met with. Said limbo is, as you know, in the moon, whither I could not at present convey myself without a good deal of difficulty and inconvenience.

This morning, being the morning of New Year's Day, I sent to the Hall a copy of verses, addressed to Mr. Throckmorton, entitled, *The Wish, or the Poet's New Year's Gift*. We dine there to-morrow, when, I suppose, I shall hear news of them. Their kindness is so great, and they seize with such eagerness every opportunity of doing all they think will please us, that I held myself almost in duty bound to treat them with this stroke of my profession.

The small-pox has done, I believe, all that it has to do at Weston. Old fol's, and even women with child, have been inoculated. We talk of our freedom, and some of us are free enough, but not the poor. Dependent as they are upon parish bounty, they



are sometimes obliged to submit to impositions which, perhaps, in France itself, could hardly be paralleled. Can man or woman be said to be free, who is commanded to take a distemper, sometimes at least mortal, and in circumstances most likely to make it so? No circumstance whatever was permitted to exempt the inhabitants of Weston. The old as well as the young, and the pregnant as well as they who had only themselves within them, have been inoculated. Were I asked who is the most arbitrary sovereign on earth, I should answer, neither the King of France, nor the Grand Signior, but an overseer of the poor in England.

I am, as heretofore, occupied with Homer: my present occupation is the revisal of all I have done, viz. of the first fifteen books. I stand amazed at my own increasing dexterity in the business, being verily persuaded that, as far as I have gone, I have improved the work to double its former value.

That you may begin the new year, and end it in all health and happiness, and many more when the present shall have been long an old one, is the ardent wish of Mrs. Unwin, and of yours. my dearest Coz. most cordially,

W. C.

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LETTER LXXXII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, Jan. 19, 1788.*

When I have prose enough to fill my paper, which is always the case when I write to you, I cannot find in my heart to give a third part of it to verse. Yet this I must do, or I must make my packets more costly than worshipful, by doubling the postage upon you, which I should hold to be unreasonable. See, then, the true reason why I did not send you that same scribblement till you desired it. The thought which naturally presents itself to me on all such occasions is this—Is not your cousin coming? Why are you impatient? Will it not be time enough to show her your fine things when she arrives?

Fine things, indeed, I have few. He who has Homer to transcribe may well be contented to do little else. As when an ass, being harnessed with ropes to a sand-cart, drags with hanging ears his heavy burthen, neither filling the long echoing streets with his harmonious bray, nor throwing up his heels behind, frolicsome and airy, as asses less engaged are wont to do; so I, satisfied to find myself indispensibly obliged to render into the best possible English metre, eight and forty Greek books, of which the two finest poems in the world consist, account it quite sufficient if I may at last achieve that labour, and seldom allow myself those



pretty little vagaries in which I should otherwise delight, and of which, if I should live long enough, I intend hereafter to enjoy my fill.

This is the reason, my dear cousin, if I may be permitted to call you so in the same breath with which I have uttered this truly heroic comparison—this is the reason why I produce, at present, but few occasional poems; and the preceding reason is that which may account satisfactorily enough for my withholding the very few that I do produce. A thought sometimes strikes me before I rise: if it runs readily into verse, and I can finish it before breakfast, it is well; otherwise it dies, and is forgotten; for all the subsequent hours are devoted to Homer.

The day before yesterday I saw, for the first time, Bunbury's new print, the Propagation of a Lie. Mr. Throckmorton sent it for the amusement of our party. Bunbury sells humour by the yard, and is, I suppose, the first vender of it who ever did so. He cannot, therefore, be said to have humour without measure, (pardon a pun, my dear, from a man who has not made one before these forty years) though he may certainly be said to be immeasurably droll.

The original thought is good, and the exemplification of it in those very expressive figures, admirable. A poem on the same subject, displaying all that is displayed in those attitudes and in those features (for faces they can hardly be called) would be most excellent. The affinity of the two arts, viz. verse and painting, has been often observed: possibly the happiest illustration of it would be found, if some poet would ally himself to some draftsman, as Bunbury, and undertake to write every thing he should draw. Then let a musician be admitted of the party. He should compose said poem, adapting notes to it exactly accommodated to the theme: so should the sister arts be proved to be indeed sisters, and the world would die of laughing.

W. C.

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LETTER LXXXIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, Jan. 30, 1788.*

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

It is a fortnight since I heard from you, that is to say, a week longer than you have accustomed me to wait for a letter. I do not forget that you have recommended it to me, on occasions somewhat similar, to banish all anxiety, and to ascribe your silence only to the interruptions of company. Good ad-

vice, my dear, but not easily taken by a man circumstanced as I am. I have learned in the school of adversity, a school from which I have no expectation that I shall ever be dismissed, to apprehend the worst, and have ever found it the only course in which I can indulge myself without the least danger of incurring a disappointment. This kind of experience, continued through many years, has given me such an habitual bias to the gloomy side of every thing, that I never have a moment's ease on any subject to which I am not indifferent. How, then, can I be easy when I am left afloat upon a sea of endless conjectures, of which you furnish the occasion? Write, I beseech you, and do not forget that I am now a battered actor upon this turbulent stage: that what little vigour of mind I ever had, of the self-supporting kind I mean, has long since been broken; and that though I can bear nothing well, yet any thing better than a state of ignorance concerning your welfare. I have spent hours in the night leaning upon my elbow, and wondering what your silence means. I intreat you once more to put an end to these speculations, which cost me more animal spirits than I can spare: if you cannot, without great trouble to yourself, (which, in your situation, may very possibly be the case,) contrive opportunities of writing so frequently as usual, only say, it, and I am content. I will wait, if you desire it, as long for every letter; but then let them arrive at the period once fixed, exactly at the time, for my patience will not hold out an hour beyond it.

W. C.

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LETTER LXXXIV.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, Feb. 1, 1788.*

Pardon me, my dearest cousin, the mournful ditty that I sent you last. There are times when I see every thing through a medium that distresses me to an insupportable degree, and that letter was written in one of them. A fog that had for three days obliterated all the beauties of Weston, and a north-east wind, might possibly contribute not a little to the melancholy that indited it. But my mind is now easy; your letter has made it so; and I feel myself as blithe as a bird in comparison. I love you, my cousin, and cannot suspect, either with or without cause, the least evil in which you may be concerned, without being greatly troubled. Oh trouble! the portion of all mortals, but mine in particular. Would I had never known thee, or could bid thee farewell for ever; for I meet thee at every turn, my pillows are stuffed with thee, my very roses smell of thee, and even my

cousin, who would cure me of all trouble if she could, is sometimes innocently the cause of trouble to me.

I now see the unreasonableness of my late trouble, and would, if I could trust myself so far, promise never again to trouble either myself or you in the same manner, unless warranted by some more substantial ground of apprehension.

What I said concerning Homer, my dear, was spoken, or rather written, merely under the influence of a certain jocularity that I felt at that moment. I am, in reality, so far from thinking myself an ass, and my translation a sand-cart, that I rather seem, in my own account of the matter, one of those flaming steeds harnessed to the chariot of Apollo, of which we read in the works of the ancients. I have lately, I know not how, acquired a certain superiority to myself in this business, and in this last revisal have elevated the expression to a degree far surpassing its former boast. A few evenings since I had an opportunity to try how far I might venture to expect such success of my labours as can alone repay them, by reading the first book of my Iliad to a friend of ours. He dined with you once at Olney. His name is Greatheed, a man of letters and of taste. He dined with us, and the evening proving dark and dirty, we persuaded him to take a bed.

I entertained him as I tell you. He heard me with great attention, and with evident symptoms of the highest satisfaction, which, when I had finished the exhibition, he put out of all doubt by expressions, which I cannot repeat. Only this he said to Mrs. Unwin, while I was in another room, that he had never entered into the spirit of Homer before, nor had any thing like a due conception of his manner. This I have said, knowing that it will please you, and will now say no more.

Adieu! my dear, will you never speak of coming to Weston more?  
W. C.

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LETTER LXXXV.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*The Lodge, Feb. 14, 1788.*

MY DEAR SIR,

Though it be long since I received your last, I have not yet forgotten the impression it made upon me, nor how sensibly I felt myself obliged by your unreserved and friendly communications. I will not apologize for my silence in the interim, because, apprized as you are of my present occupation, the excuse that I might allege will present itself to you of course, and to dilate upon it would therefore be waste of paper.

You are in possession of the best security imaginable for the due improvement of your time, which is a just sense of its value. Had I been, when at your age, as much affected by that important consideration as I am at present, I should not have devoted, as I did, all the earliest part of my life to amusement only. I am now in the predicament into which the thoughtlessness of youth betrays nine-tenths of mankind, who never discover that the health and good spirits which generally accompany it, are, in reality, blessings only according to the use we make of them, till advanced years begin to threaten them with the loss of both. How much wiser would thousands have been, than now they ever will be, had a puny constitution, or some occasional infirmity, constrained them to devote those hours to study and reflection, which, for want of some such check, they have given entirely to dissipation! I, therefore, account you happy, who, young as you are, need not to be informed that you cannot always be so, and who already know, that the materials upon which age can alone build its comfort, should be brought together at an earlier period. You have, indeed, losing a father, lost a friend, but you have not lost his instructions. His example was not buried with him, but happily for you, (happily, because you are desirous to avail yourself of it) still lives in your remembrance, and is cherished in your best affections.

Your last letter was dated from the house of a gentleman who was, I believe, my school-fellow; for the Mr. C—— who lived at Watford while I had any connection with Hertfordshire, must have been the father of the present, and, according to his age and the state of his health when I saw him last, must have been long dead. I never was acquainted with the family further than by report, which always spoke honourably of them, though in all my journies to and from my father's I must have passed the door. The circumstance, however, reminds me of the beautiful reflection of Glaucus in the sixth Iliad; beautiful as well for the affecting nature of the observation, as for the justness of the comparison and the incomparable simplicity of the expression. I feel that I shall not be satisfied without transcribing it, and yet, perhaps, my Greek may be difficult to decypher.

Οἷη περὶ Φυλλῶν γενεή, τοιῆδε καὶ ἀνδρῶν.  
 Φύλλα τὰ μὲν τ' ἀνεμὸς χαμαδιῶ χεῖρι, ἀλλ' αὖ δὲ θ' ὕλην  
 Τηλεδοῦσα φύει, εἶσος δ' ἐπιγιγνεται ὤρη;  
 Ὡς ἀνδρῶν γενεή, ἢ μὲν φύει, ἢ δ' ἀποληγεί.

Excuse this piece of pedantry in a man whose Homer is always before him. What would I give that he were living now, and



within my reach! I, of all men living, have the best excuse for indulging such a wish, unreasonable as it may seem; for I have no doubt that the fire of his eye, and the smile of his lips, would put me now and then in possession of his full meaning more effectually than any commentator. I return you many thanks for the elegies which you sent me, both which I think deserving of much commendation. I should requite you but ill by sending you my mortuary verses, neither at present can I prevail on myself to do it, having no frank, and being conscious that they are not worth carriage without one. I have one copy left, and that copy I will keep for you.

W. C.

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LETTER LXXXVI.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, Feb. 16, 1788.*

I have now three letters of yours, my dearest cousin, before me, all written in the space of a week, and must be, indeed, insensible of kindness, did I not feel yours on this occasion. I cannot describe to you, neither could you comprehend it if I should, the manner in which my mind is sometimes impressed with melancholy on particular subjects. Your late silence was such a subject. I heard, saw, and felt a thousand terrible things, which had no real existence, and was haunted by them night and day, till they at last extorted from me the doleful epistle which I have since wished had been burned before I sent it. But the cloud has passed, and, as far as you are concerned, my heart is once more at rest.

Before you gave me the hint, I had once or twice, as I lay on my bed, watching the break of day, ruminated on the subject which, in your last but one, you recommend to me.

Slavery, or a release from slavery, such as the poor Negroes have endured, or perhaps both these topics together, appeared to me a theme so important at the present juncture, and at the same time so susceptible of poetical management, that I more than once perceived myself ready to start in that career, could I have allowed myself to desert Homer for so long a time as it would have cost me to do them justice.

While I was pondering these things, the public prints informed me that Miss More was on the point of publication, having actually finished what I had not yet begun.

The sight of her advertisement convinced me that my best course would be that to which I felt myself most inclined, to persevere,



without turning aside to attend to any other call, however alluring, in the business that I have in hand.

It occurred to me, likewise, that I have already borne my testimony in favour of my black brethren, and that I was one of the earliest, if not the first of those who have, in the present day, expressed their detestation of the diabolical traffic in question.

On all these accounts I judged it best to be silent, and especially because I cannot doubt that some effectual measures will now be taken to alleviate the miseries of their condition, the whole nation being in possession of the case, and it being impossible also to allege an argument in behalf of man-merchandize that can deserve a hearing. I shall be glad to see Hannah More's poem: she is a favourite writer with me, and has more nerve and energy, both in her thoughts and language, than half the he-rhymers in the kingdom. The Thoughts on the Manners of the Great will likewise be most acceptable. I want to learn as much of the world as I can, but to acquire that learning at a distance; and a book with such a title promises fair to serve the purpose effectually.

I recommend it to you, my dear, by all means to embrace the fair occasion, and to put yourself in the way of being squeezed and incommoded a few hours, for the sake of hearing and seeing what you will never have opportunity to see and hear hereafter, the trial of a man who has been greater, and more feared, than the Great Mogul himself. Whatever we are at home, we have certainly been tyrants in the East; and if these men have, as they are charged, rioted in the miseries of the innocent, and dealt death to the guiltless with an unsparing hand, may they receive a retribution that shall in future make all governors and judges of ours, in those distant regions, tremble. While I speak thus, I equally wish them acquitted. They were both my school-fellows, and for Hastings I had a particular value. Farewell,

W. C.

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LETTER LXXXVII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, Feb. 22, 1788.*

I do not wonder that your ears and feelings were hurt by Mr. Burke's severe invective. But you are to know, my dear, or probably you know it already, that the prosecution of public delinquents has always, and in all countries, been thus conducted. The stile of a criminal charge of this kind has been an affair settled among orators from the days of Tully to the present, and like all other practices that have obtained for ages, this, in

particular, seems to have been founded originally in reason, and in the necessity of the case.

He who accuses another to the state, must not appear himself unmoved by the view of crimes with which he charges him, least he should be suspected of fiction, or of precipitancy, or of a consciousness that, after all, he shall not be able to prove his allegations. On the contrary, in order to impress the minds of his hearers with a persuasion that he himself at least is convinced of the criminality of the prisoner, he must be vehement, energetic, rapid; must call him tyrant, and traitor, and every thing else that is odious, and all this to his face, because all this, bad as it is, is no more than he undertakes to prove in the sequel, and if he cannot prove it he must himself appear in a light very little more desirable, and at the best to have trifled with the tribunal to which he has summoned him.

Thus Tully, in the very first sentence of his first oration against Cataline, calls him a monster; a manner of address in which he persisted till said monster, unable to support the fury of his accuser's eloquence any longer, rose from his seat, elbowed for himself a passage through the crowd, and at last burst from the senate-house in an agony, as if the furies themselves had followed him.

And now; my dear, though I have thus spoken, and have seemed to plead the cause of that species of eloquence which you, and every creature who has your sentiments, must necessarily dislike, perhaps I am not altogether convinced of its propriety. Perhaps, at the bottom, I am much more of opinion, that if the charge, unaccompanied by any inflammatory matter, and simply detailed, being once delivered into the court, and read aloud, the witnesses were immediately examined, and sentence pronounced according to the evidence, not only the process would be shortened, much time and much expense saved, but justice would have at least as fair play as now she has. Prejudice is of no use in weighing the question—Guilty or not guilty; and the principal aim, end, and effect of such introductory harangues is to create as much prejudice as possible. When you and I, therefore, shall have the whole and sole management of such a business entrusted to us, we will order it otherwise.

I was glad to learn from the papers that our cousin Henry shone as he did in reading the charge. This must have given much pleasure to the General.

Thy ever affectionate,

W. C.

## LETTER LXXXVIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, March 3, 1788.*

One day last week, Mrs. Unwin and I having taken our morning walk, and returning homeward through the wilderness, met the Throckmortons. A minute after we had met them, we heard the cry of hounds at no great distance, and mounting the broad stump of an elm, which had been felled, and by the aid of which we were enabled to look over the wall, we saw them. They were all that time in our orchard: presently we heard a terrier, belonging to Mrs. Throckmorton, which you may remember by the name of Fury, yelping with much vehemence, and saw her running through the thickets, within a few yards of us, at her utmost speed, as if in pursuit of something, which we doubted not was the fox. Before we could reach the other end of the wilderness, the hounds entered also; and when we arrived at the gate which opens into the grove, there we found the whole weary cavalcade assembled. The huntsman dismounting, begged leave to follow his hounds on foot, for he was sure, he said, that they had killed him—a conclusion which I suppose he drew from their profound silence. He was accordingly admitted, and with a sagacity that would not have dishonoured the best hound in the world, pursuing precisely the same track which the fox and the dogs had taken, though he had never had a glimpse of either after their first entrance through the rails, arrived where he found the slaughtered prey. He soon produced dead Reynard, and rejoined us in the grove, with all his dogs about him. Having an opportunity to see a ceremony, which I was pretty sure would never fall in my way again, I determined to stay, and to notice all that passed with the most minute attention. The huntsman having, by the aid of a pitchfork, lodged Reynard on the arm of an elm, at the height of about nine feet from the ground, there left him for a considerable time. The gentlemen sat on their horses contemplating the fox, for which they had toiled so hard; and the hounds, assembled at the foot of the tree, with faces not less expressive of the most rational delight, contemplated the same object. The huntsman remounted; he cut off a foot, and threw it to the hounds; one of them swallowed it whole like a bolus. He then once more alighted, and drawing down the fox by the hinder legs, desired the people, who were by this time rather numerous, to open a lane for him to the right and left. He was instantly obeyed, when, throwing the fox to the distance of some yards, and screaming like a fiend, “tear him to pieces,” at least six times repeatedly, he

consigned him over absolutely to the pack, who in a few minutes devoured him completely. Thus, my dear, as Virgil says, what none of the gods could have ventured to promise me, time itself, pursuing its accustomed course, has of its own accord presented me with. I have been in at the death of a fox, and you know as much of the matter as I, who am as well informed as any sportsman in England. Yours,

W. C.

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LETTER LXXXIX.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, March 12, 1788.*

Slavery, and the Manners of the Great, I have read. The former I admired, as I do all that Miss More writes, as well for energy of expression, as for the tendency of the design. I have never yet seen any production of her pen that has not recommended itself by both these qualifications. There is likewise much good sense in her manner of treating every subject, and no mere poetic cant (which is the thing that I abhor) in her manner of treating any. And this I say, not because you now know and visit her, but it has long been my avowed opinion of her works, which I have both spoken and written as often as I have had occasion to mention them.

Mr. Wilberforce's little book (if he was the author of it) has also charmed me. It must, I should imagine, engage the notice of those to whom it is addressed. In that case one may say to them, either answer it, or be set down by it. They will do neither. They will approve, commend, and forget it. Such has been the fate of all exhortations to reform, whether in verse or prose, and however closely pressed upon the conscience in all ages, here and there a happy individual, to whom God gives grace and wisdom to profit by the admonition, is the better for it. But the aggregate body (as Gilbert Cooper used to call the multitude) remain, though with a very good understanding of the matter, like horse and mule that have none.

We shall now soon lose our neighbours at the Hall. We shall truly miss them, and long for their return. Mr. Throckmorton said to me last night, with sparkling eyes, and a face expressive of the highest pleasure, "We compared you this morning with Pope; we read your fourth Iliad, and his, and I verily think we shall beat him. He has many superfluous lines, and does not interest one. When I read your translation, I am deeply affected. I see plainly your advantage, and am convinced that Pope spoiled all by attempting the work in rhyme." His brother George, who is my

most active amanuensis, and who indeed first introduced the subject, seconded all he said. More would have passed, but Mrs. Throckmorton having seated herself at the harpsichord, and for my amusement merely, my attention was of course turned to her. The new vicar of Olney is arrived, and we have exchanged visits. He is a plain, sensible man, and pleases me much. A treasure for Olney, if Olney can understand his value. Adieu.

W. C.

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LETTER XC.

To General COWPER.

*Weston, Dec. 13, 1787.*

MY DEAR GENERAL,

A letter is not pleasant which excites curiosity, but does not gratify it. Such a letter was my last, the defects of which I therefore take the first opportunity to supply. When the condition of our negroes in the Islands was first presented to me as a subject for songs, I felt myself not at all allured to the undertaking; it seemed to offer only images of horror, which could by no means be accommodated to the style of that sort of composition. But having a desire to comply, if possible, with the request made to me, after turning the matter in my mind as many ways as I could, I at last, as I told you, produced three, and that which appears to myself the best of those three, I have sent you. Of the other two, one is serious, in a strain of thought perhaps rather too serious, and I could not help it. The other, of which the slave-trader is himself the subject, is somewhat ludicrous. If I could think them worth your seeing, I would, as opportunity should occur, send them also. If this amuses you I shall be glad.

W. C.

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THE MORNING DREAM.\*

A BALLAD.

*To the Tune of Tweed-side.*

'Twas in the glad season of spring,  
 Asleep at the dawn of the day,  
 I dream'd what I cannot but sing,  
 So pleasant it seem'd as I lay.

\* The excellence of this ballad induces me to re-print it here, although it has appeared in the last edition of Cowper's Poems.



I dream'd that on ocean afloat,  
Far hence to the westward I sail'd,  
While the billows high lifted the boat,  
And the fresh blowing breeze never fail'd.

In the steerage a woman I saw,  
Such at least was the form that she wore,  
Whose beauty impress'd me with awe,  
Never taught me by woman before.  
She sat, and a shield at her side  
Shed light like a sun on the waves,  
And smiling divinely, she cry'd—  
“ I go to make freemen of slaves.”

Then raising her voice to a strain  
The sweetest that ear ever heard,  
She sung of the slave's broken chain,  
Wherever her glory appear'd.  
Some clouds which had over us hung  
Fled, chas'd by her melody clear,  
And methought, while she liberty sung,  
'Twas liberty only to hear.

Thus swiftly dividing the flood,  
To a slave-cultur'd island we came,  
Where a demon, her enemy stood,  
Oppression his terrible name.  
In his hand, as a sign of his sway,  
A scourge hung with lashes he bore,  
And stood looking out for his prey  
From Africa's sorrowful shore.

But soon as, approaching the land,  
That goddess-like woman he view'd,  
The scourge he let fall from his hand,  
With blood of his subjects imbrued.  
I saw him both sicken and die,  
And the moment the monster expir'd  
Heard shouts that ascended the sky,  
From thousands with rapture inspir'd.

Awaking, how could I but muse  
At what such a dream should betide?  
But soon my ear caught the glad news,  
Which serv'd my weak thought for a guide—

That Britannia, renown'd o'er the waves  
 For the hatred she ever has shown  
 To the black-sceptred rulers of slaves,  
 Resolves to have none of her own.

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LETTER XCI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

Weston, March 29, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I rejoice that you have so successfully performed so long a journey without the aid of hoofs or wheels. I do not know that a journey on foot exposes a man to more disasters than a carriage or a horse; perhaps it may be the safer way of travelling; but the novelty of it impressed me with some anxiety on your account.

It seems almost incredible to myself, that my company should be at all desirable to you, or to any man. I know so little of the world as it goes at present, and labour generally under such a depression of spirits, especially at those times when I could wish to be most cheerful, that my own share in every conversation appears to me to be the most insipid thing imaginable. But you say you found it otherwise, and I will not, for my own sake, doubt your sincerity, *de gustibus non est disputandum*, and since such is yours, I shall leave you in quiet possession of it, wishing, indeed, both its continuance and increase. I shall not find a properer place in which to say, accept of Mrs. Unwin's acknowledgments, as well as mine, for the kindness of your expressions on this subject, and be assured of an undissembling welcome at all times when it shall suit you to give us your company at Weston. As to her, she is one of the sincerest of the human race, and if she receives you with the appearance of pleasure, it is because she feels it. Her behaviour on such occasions is with her an affair of conscience, and she dares no more look a falsehood than utter one.

It is almost time to tell you that I have received the books safe; they have not suffered the least detriment by the way, and I am much obliged to you for them. If my translation should be a little delayed in consequence of this favour of yours, you must take the blame on yourself. It is impossible not to read the notes of a commentator so learned, so judicious, and of so fine a taste as Dr. Clarke, having him at one's elbow. Though he has been but few hours under my roof, I have already peeped at him, and find that he will be *instar omnium* to me. They are such notes exactly as I wanted. A translator of Homer should ever have

somebody at hand to say, "that's a beauty," lest he should slumber where his author does not; not only depreciating, by such inadvertency, the work of his original, but depriving, perhaps, his own of an embellishment which wanted only to be noticed.

If you hear ballads sung in the streets on the hardships of the negroes in the islands, they are probably mine. It must be an honour to any man to have given a stroke to that chain, however feeble. I fear, however, that the attempt will fail. The tidings which have lately reached me from London concerning it, are not the most encouraging. While the matter slept, or was but slightly adverted to, the English only had their share of shame, in common with other nations, on account of it. But since it has been canvassed and searched to the bottom, since the public attention has been rivetted to the horrible scheme, we can no longer plead either that we did not know it, or did not think of it. Woe be to us if we refuse the poor captives the redress to which they have so clear a right, and prove ourselves, in the sight of God and men, indifferent to all considerations but those of gain. Adieu.

W. C.

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LETTER XCII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, March 31, 1788.*

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Mrs. Throckmorton has promised to write to me. I beg that, as often as you shall see her, you will give her a smart pinch, and say, "have you written to my cousin?" I build all my hopes of her performance on this expedient, and for so doing these my letters, not patent, shall be your sufficient warrant. You are thus to give her the question till she shall answer, Yes. I have written one more song, and sent it. It is called the Morning Dream, and may be sung to the tune of Tweed-side, or any other tune that will suit it, for I am not nice on that subject. I would have copied it for you, had I not almost filled my sheet without it; but now, my dear, you must stay till the sweet sirens of London shall bring it to you, or, if that happy day should never arrive, I hereby acknowledge myself your debtor to that amount. I shall now probably cease to sing of tortured negroes, a theme which never pleased me, but which, in the hope of doing them some little service, I was not unwilling to handle.

If any thing could have raised Miss More to a higher place in my opinion than she possessed before, it could only be your information that, after all, she, and not Mr. Wilberforce, is author

of that volume. How comes it to pass that she, being a woman, writes with a force and energy, and a correctness, hitherto arrogated by the men, and not very frequently displayed even by the men themselves? Adieu.

W. C.

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LETTER XCIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

*Weston, May 8, 1788:*

Alas! my library—I must now give it up for a lost thing for ever. The only consolation belonging to the circumstance is, or seems to be, that no such loss did ever befall any other man, or can ever befall me again. As far as books are concerned, I am

*Totus teres atque rotundus,*

and may set fortune at defiance. Those books which had been my father's, had, most of them, his arms on the inside cover, but the rest no mark, neither his name nor mine. I could mourn for them like Sancho for his Dapple, but it would avail me nothing.

You will oblige me much by sending me Crazy Kate. A gentleman last winter promised me both her and the Lace-maker, but he went to London, that place in which, as in the grave, "all things are forgotten," and I have never seen either of them.

I begin to find some prospect of a conclusion, of the Iliad at least, now opening upon me, having reached the eighteenth book. Your letter found me yesterday in the very fact of dispersing the whole host of Troy, by the voice only of Achilles. There is nothing extravagant in the idea, for you have witnessed a similar effect attending even such a voice as mine, at midnight, from a garret window, on the dogs of a whole parish, whom I have put to flight in a moment.

W. C.

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LETTER XCIV.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, May 12, 1788.*

It is probable, my dearest coz. that I shall not be able to write much, but as much as I can I will. The time between rising and breakfast is all that I can at present find, and this morning I lay longer than usual.

In the style of the lady's note to you I can easily perceive a smatch of her character. Neither men nor women write with

such neatness of expression, who have not given a good deal of attention to language, and qualified themselves by study. At the same time it gave me much more pleasure to observe, that my coz. though not standing on the pinnacle of renown quite so elevated as that which lifts Mrs. Montagu to the clouds, falls in no degree short of her in this particular; so that, should she make you a member of her academy, she will do it honour. Suspect me not of flattering you, for I abhor the thought; neither *will* you suspect it. Recollect that it is an invariable rule with me never to pay compliments to those I love!

Two days, en suite, I have walked to Gayhurst; a longer journey than I have walked on foot these seventeen years. The first day I went alone, designing merely to make the experiment, and choosing to be at liberty to return at whatsoever point of my pilgrimage I should find myself fatigued. For I was not without suspicion that years, and some other things no less injurious than years, viz. melancholy and distress of mind, might, by this time, have unfitted me for such achievements. But I found it otherwise. I reached the church, which stands, as you know, in the garden, in fifty-five minutes, and returned in ditto time to Weston. The next day I took the same walk with Mr. Powley, having a desire to show him the prettiest place in the country. I not only performed these two excursions without injury to my health, but have, by means of them, gained indisputable proof, that my ambulatory faculty is not yet impaired; a discovery which, considering that to my feet alone I am likely, as I have ever been, to be indebted always for my transportation from place to place, I find very delectable.

You will find in the last Gentleman's Magazine, a sonnet addressed to Henry Cowper, signed T. H. I am the writer of it. No creature knows this but yourself: you will make what use of the intelligence you shall see good.

W. C.

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LETTER XCV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

May 24, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

For two excellent prints, I return you my sincere acknowledgments. I cannot say that poor Kate resembles much the original, who was neither so young, nor so handsome as the pencil has represented her; but she was a figure well suited to the account given of her in the *Task*, and has a face exceedingly expressive of despairing melancholy. The lace-maker is accidentally a good likeness of a young woman, once our neighbour,



who was hardly less handsome than the picture twenty years ago; but the loss of one husband, and the acquisition of another, have, since that time, impaired her much; yet she might still be supposed to have sat to the artist.

We dined yesterday with your friend and mine, the most companionable and domestic Mr. C——. The whole kingdom can hardly furnish a spectacle more pleasing to a man who has a taste for true happiness, than himself, Mrs. C——, and their multitudinous family. Seven long miles are interposed between us, or perhaps I should oftener have an opportunity of declaiming on this subject.

I am now in the nineteenth book of the Iliad, and on the point of displaying such feats of heroism, performed by Achilles, as make all other achievements trivial. I may well exclaim, Oh! for a Muse of fire! especially having not only a great host to cope with, but a great river also; much, however, may be done when Homer leads the way. I should not have chosen to have been the original author of such a business, even though all the Nine had stood at my elbow. Time has wonderful effects. We admire that in an ancient, for which we should send a modern bard to Bedlam.

I saw at Mr. C——'s a great curiosity; an antique bust of Paris, in Parian marble. You will conclude that it interested me exceedingly. I pleased myself with supposing that it once stood in Helen's chamber. It was in fact brought from the Levant, and though not well mended, (for it had suffered much by time) is an admirable performance.

W. C.

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#### LETTER XCVI.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, May 27, 1788.*

The General, in a letter which came yesterday, sent me inclosed a copy of my sonnet; thus introducing it.

“ I send a copy of verses somebody has written in the Gentleman's Magazine for April last. Independent of my partiality towards the subject, I think the lines themselves are good.”

Thus it appears, that my poetical adventure has succeeded to my wish; and I write to him by this post, on purpose to inform him that the somebody in question is myself.

I no longer wonder that Mrs. Montagu stands at the head of all that is called learned, and that every critic veils his bonnet to her superior judgment. I am now reading, and have reached the middle of her essay on the genius of Shakspeare; a book of which,

strange as it may seem, though I must have read it formerly, I had absolutely forgot the existence.

The learning, the good sense, the sound judgment, and the wit displayed in it, fully justify, not only my compliment, but all compliments that either have been already paid to her talents, or shall be paid hereafter. Voltaire, I doubt not, rejoiced that his antagonist wrote in English, and that his countrymen could not possibly be judges of the dispute. Could they have known how much she was in the right, and by how many thousand miles the bard of Avon is superior to all their dramatists, the French critic would have lost half his fame among them.

I saw at Mr. C——'s a head of Paris; an antique of Parian marble. His uncle, who left him the estate, brought it, as I understand Mr. C——, from the Levant: you may suppose I viewed it with all the enthusiasm that belongs to a translator of Homer. It is, in reality, a great curiosity, and highly valuable.

Our friend Sephus has sent me two prints; the Lace-maker and Crazy Kate. These also I have contemplated with pleasure; having, as you know, a particular interest in them. The former of them is not more beautiful than a lace-maker, once our neighbour at Olney; though the artist has assembled as many charms in her countenance as I ever saw in any countenance, one excepted. Kate is both younger and handsomer than the original from which I drew; but she is in a good style, and as mad as need be.

How does this hot weather suit thee, my dear, in London? as for me, with all my colonades and bowers, I am quite oppressed by it.

W. C.

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### LETTER XCVII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, June 3, 1788.*

MY DEAREST COZ.

The excessive heat of these last few days was, indeed, oppressive; but, excepting the languor that it occasioned both in my mind and body, it was far from being prejudicial to me. It opened ten thousand pores, by which as many mischiefs, the effects of long obstruction, began to breathe themselves forth abundantly. Then came an east wind, baneful to me at all times, but following so closely such a sultry season, uncommonly noxious. To speak in the seaman's phrase, not entirely strange to you, I was *taken all aback*; and the humours which would have escaped, if old Eurys would have given them leave, finding every door shut, have fallen into my eyes. But, in a country like this,

poor miserable mortals must be content to suffer all that sudden and violent changes can inflict; and if they are quit for about half the plagues that Caliban calls down on Prospero, they may say we are well off, and dance for joy, if the rheumatism or cramp will let them.

Did you ever see an advertisement by one Fowle, a dancing-master of Newport-Pagnel? If not, I will contrive to send it you for your amusement. It is the most extravagantly ludicrous affair of the kind I ever saw. The author of it had the good hap to be crazed, or he had never produced any thing half so clever; for you will ever observe, that they who are said to have lost their wits, have more than other people. It is, therefore, only a slander, with which envy prompts the malignity of persons in their senses, to asperse those who are wittier than themselves. But there are countries in the world, where the mad have justice done them, where they are revered as the subjects of inspiration, and consulted as oracles. Poor Fowle would have made a figure there.

W. C.

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### LETTER XCVIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

*Weston, June 8, 1788.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your letter brought me the very first intelligence of the event it mentions. My last letter from Lady Hesketh gave me reason enough to expect it; but the certainty of it was unknown to me till I learned it by your information. If gradual decline, the consequence of great age, be a sufficient preparation of the mind to encounter such a loss, our minds were certainly prepared to meet it: yet, to you, I need not say, that no preparation can supersede the feelings of the heart on such occasions. While our friends yet live, inhabitants of the same world with ourselves, they seem still to live to *us*; we are sure that they sometimes think of us; and however improbable it may seem, it is never impossible that we may see each other once again. But the grave, like a great gulph, swallows all such expectations: and in the moment when a beloved friend sinks into it, a thousand tender recollections awaken a regret, that will be felt in spite of all reasonings, and let our warnings have been what they may. Thus it is I take my last leave of poor Ashley, whose heart towards me was ever truly parental, and to whose memory I owe a tenderness and respect that will never leave me.

W. C.

## LETTER XCIX.

To Lady HESKETH.

MY DEAR COZ.

*The Lodge, June 10, 1788.*

Your kind letter of precaution to Mr. Gregson, sent him hither as soon as chapel service was ended in the evening; but he found me already apprized of the event that occasioned it, by a line from Seplus, received a few hours before. My dear uncle's death awakened in me many reflections, which, for a time, sunk my spirits. A man, like him, would have been mourned, had he doubled the age he reached; at any age, his death would have been felt as a loss that no survivor could repair. And though it was not probable that, for my own part, I should ever see him more, yet the consciousness that he still lived was a comfort to me: let it comfort us now, that we have lost him only at a time when nature could afford him to us no longer; that as his life was blameless, so was his death without anguish; and that he is gone to heaven. I know not that human life, in its most prosperous state, can present any thing to our wishes half so desirable as such a close of it.

Not to mingle this subject with others that would ill suit with it, I will add no more at present, than a warm hope that you and your sister will be able effectually to avail yourselves of all the consolatory matter with which it abounds. You gave yourselves, while he lived, to a father, whose life was doubtless prolonged by your attentions, and whose tenderness of disposition made him always deeply sensible of your kindness in this respect, as well as in many others. His old age was the happiest that I have ever known; and I give you both joy of having had so fair an opportunity, and of having so well used it, to approve yourselves equal to the calls of such a duty in the sight of God and man.

W. C.

## LETTER C.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, June 15, 1788.*

Although I knew that you must be very much occupied on the present most affecting occasion, yet not hearing from you, I began to be very uneasy on your account, and to fear that your health might have suffered by the fatigue, both of body and spirits, that you must have undergone, till a letter, that reached me yesterday, from the General, set my heart at rest, so far as that cause of anxiety was in question. He speaks of my

uncle in the tenderest terms; such as show how truly sensible he was of the amiableness and excellence of his character, and how deeply he regrets his loss. We have indeed lost one, who has not left his like in the present generation of our family, and whose equal, in all respects, no future of it will probably produce. My memory retains so perfect an impression of him, that had I been a painter instead of a poet, I could, from those faithful traces, have perpetuated his face and form with the most minute exactness. And this I the rather wonder at, because some with whom I was equally conversant five and twenty years ago, have almost faded out of all recollection with me: but he made impression not soon to be effaced; and was in figure, in temper, and manner, and in numerous other respects, such as I shall never behold again. I often think what a joyful interview there has been between him and some of his cotemporaries who went before him. The truth of the matter is, my dear, that they are the happy ones, and that we shall never be such ourselves till we have joined the party. Can there be any thing so worthy of our warmest wishes, as to enter on an eternal, unchangeable state, in blessed fellowship and communion with those whose society we valued most, and for the best reasons while they continued with us? A few steps more, through a vain foolish world, and this happiness will be yours: but be not hasty, my dear, to accomplish thy journey! For of all that live, thou art one whom I can least spare, for thou also art one who shall not leave thy equal behind thee.

W. C.

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#### LETTER CI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*Weston, June 23, 1788.*

When I tell you that an unanswered letter troubles my conscience, in some degree, like a crime, you will think me endued with a most heroic patience, who have so long submitted to that trouble on account of yours not answered yet. But the truth is that I have been much engaged. Homer, you know, affords me constant employment: besides which, I have rather what may be called, considering the privacy in which I have long lived, a numerous correspondence: to one of my friends in particular, a near and much loved relation, I write weekly, and sometimes twice in the week: nor are these my only excuses; the sudden changes of the weather have much affected me, and especially with a disorder most unfavourable to letter-writing, an inflammation in my eyes. With all these apologies I approach you once more, not altogether despairing of forgiveness.



It has pleased God to give us rain, without which this part of our country at least must soon have become a desert. The meadows have been parched to a January brown, and we have foddered our cattle for some time, as in the winter.—The goodness and power of God are never, I believe, so universally acknowledged as at the end of a long drought. Man is naturally a self-sufficient animal, and in all concerns that seem to lie within the sphere of his own ability, thinks little or not at all of the need he always has of protection and furtherance from above: but he is sensible that the clouds will not assemble at his bidding, and that though the clouds assemble, they will not fall in showers because he commands them. When, therefore, at last, the blessing descends, you shall hear, even in the streets, the most irreligious and thoughtless, with one voice, exclaim, “Thank God!”—confessing themselves indebted to his favour, and willing, at least so far as words go, to give him the glory. I can hardly doubt, therefore, that the earth is sometimes parched, and the crops endangered, in order that the multitude may not want a memento to whom they owe them, nor absolutely forget the power on which all depend for all things.

Our solitary part of the year is over. Mrs. Unwin’s daughter and son-in-law have lately spent some time with us: we shall shortly receive from London our old friends the Newtons, (he was once minister of Oiney) and when they leave us, we expect that Lady Hesketh will succeed them, perhaps to spend the summer here, and possibly the winter also. The summer, indeed, is leaving us at a rapid rate, as do all the seasons; and though I have marked their flight so often, I know not which is the swiftest. Man is never so deluded as when he dreams of his own duration. The answer of the old Patriarch to Pharaoh may be adopted by every man at the close of the longest life—“Few and evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage.” Whether we look back from fifty, or from twice fifty, the past appears equally a dream; and we can only be said truly to have lived while we have been profitably employed. Alas! then, making the necessary deductions, how short is life! Were men, in general, to save themselves all the steps they take to no purpose, or to a bad one, what numbers, who are now active, would become sedentary!

Thus I have sermonized through my paper. Living where you live, you can bear with me the better. I always follow the leading of my unconstrained thoughts when I write to a friend, be they grave or otherwise. Homer reminds me of you every day. I am now in the twenty-first Iliad. Adieu.

W. C.

## LETTER CII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, July 28, 1788.*

It is in vain that you tell me you have no talent at description, while, in fact, you describe better than any body. You have given me a most complete idea of your mansion and its situation; and I doubt not that, with your letter in my hand, by way of map, could I be set down on the spot in a moment, I should find myself qualified to take my walks and my pastime in whatever quarter of your paradise it should please me the most to visit. We also, as you know, have scenes at Weston worthy of description; but because you know them well, I will only say that one of them has, within these few days, been much improved—I mean the lime-walk. By the help of the axe and the wood-bill, which have of late been constantly employed in cutting out all straggling branches that intercepted the arch, Mr. Throckmorton has now defined it with such exactness, that no cathedral in the world can show one of more magnificence or beauty. I bless myself that I live so near it; for, were it distant several miles, it would be well worth while to visit it, merely as an object of taste; not to mention the refreshment of such a gloom both to the eyes and spirits. And these are the things which our modern improvers of parks and pleasure grounds have displaced without mercy; because, forsooth, they are rectilinear. It is a wonder they do not quarrel with the sun-beams for the same reason.

Have you seen the account of five hundred celebrated authors now living? I am one of them; but stand charged with the high crime and misdemeanor of totally neglecting method—an accusation which, if the gentleman would take the pains to read me, he would find sufficiently refuted. I am conscious, at least myself, of having laboured much in the arrangement of my matter, and of having given to the several parts of every book of the *Task*, as well as to each poem in the first volume, that sort of slight connection which poetry demands; for in poetry (except professedly of the didactic kind) a logical precision would be stiff, pedantic, and ridiculous. But there is no pleasing some critics; the comfort is, that I am contented whether they be pleased or not. At the same time, to my honour be it spoken, the chronicler of us five hundred prodigies bestows on me, for ought I know, more commendations than on any other of my confraternity. May he live to write the histories of as many thousand poets, and find me the very best among them! Amen!

I join with you, my dearest coz. in wishing that I owned the fec-

simple of all the beautiful scenes around you; but such emoliments were never designed for poets. Am I not happier than ever poet was, in having thee for my cousin; and in the expectation of thy arrival here, whenever Strawberry-Hill shall lose thee?

Ever thine,

W. C.

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LETTER CIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, August 9, 1788:*

The Newtons are still here, and continue with us, I believe, until the 15th of the month. Here is also my friend Mr. Rose, a valuable young man, who, attracted by the effluvia of my genius, found me out in my retirement last January twelvemonth. I have not permitted him to be idle, but have made him transcribe for me the twelfth book of the Iliad. He brings me the compliments of several of the literati with whom he is acquainted in town; and tells me that, from Dr. Maclean, whom he saw lately, he learns that my book is in the hands of sixty different persons at the Hague, who are all enchanted with it; not forgetting the said Dr. Maclean himself, who tells him that he reads it every day, and is always the better for it. Oh rare we!

I have been employed this morning in composing a Latin motto for the King's clock; the embellishments of which are by Mr. Bacon. That gentleman breakfasted with us on Wednesday, having come thirty-seven miles out of his way on purpose to see your cousin. At his request I have done it, and have made two; he will choose that which liketh him best. Mr. Bacon is a most excellent man, and a most agreeable companion: I would that he lived not so remote, or that he had more opportunity of travelling.

There is not, so far as I know, a syllable of the rhyming correspondence between me and my poor brother left, save and except the six lines of it quoted in yours. I had the whole of it, but it perished in the wreck of a thousand other things when I left the Temple.

Breakfast calls. Adieu.

W. C.

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LETTER CIV.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

*Weston, August 18, 1788.*

I left you with a sensible regret, alleviated only by the consideration, that I shall see you again in October. I was under some concern also, least, not being able to give you any

certain directions myself, nor knowing where you might find a guide, you should wander and fatigue yourself, good walker as you are, before you should reach Northampton. Perhaps you heard me whistle just after our separation; it was to call back Beau, who was running after you with all speed to intreat you to return with me. For my part, I took my own time to return, and did not reach home till after one; and then so weary that I was glad of my great chair; to the comforts of which I added a crust, and a glass of rum and water, not without great occasion. Such a foot-traveller am I.

I am writing on Monday, but whether I shall finish my letter this morning depends on Mrs. Unwin's coming sooner or later down to breakfast. Something tells me that you set off to-day for Birmingham; and though it be a sort of Iricism to say here, "I beseech you take care of yourself, for the day threatens great heat," I cannot help it; the weather may be cold enough at the time when that good advice shall reach you, but be it hot or be it cold, to a man who travels as you travel, "take care of yourself," can never be an unreasonable caution. I am sometimes distressed on this account, for though you are young, and well made for such exploits, those very circumstances are more likely than any thing to betray you into danger.

Consule quid valeant *planta*, quid ferre recusent.

The Newtons left us on Friday. We frequently talked about you after your departure, and every thing that was spoken was to your advantage. I know they will be glad to see you in London, and perhaps when your summer and autumn rambles are over, you will afford them that pleasure. The Throckmortons are equally well disposed to you; and them also I recommend to you as a valuable connection; the rather, because you can only cultivate it at Weston.

I have not been idle since you went, having not only laboured as usual at the Iliad, but composed a *spick* and *span* new piece, called, "The Dog and the Water-lily;" which you shall see when we meet again. I believe I related to you the incident which is the subject of it. I have also read most of Lavater's Aphorisms; they appear to me some of them wise, many of them whimsical, a few of them false, and not a few of them extravagant. Nil illi medium. If he finds in a man the feature or quality that he approves, he deifies him; if the contrary, he is a devil. His verdict is in neither case, I suppose, a just one.



## LETTER CV.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*Weston, Sept. 11, 1788.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Since your departure I have twice visited the oak, and with an intention to push my inquiries a mile beyond it, where it seems I should have found another oak much larger, and much more respectable than the former; but once I was hindered by the rain, and once by the sultriness of the day. This latter oak has been known by the name of Judith many ages; and is said to have been an oak at the time of the conquest. If I have not an opportunity to reach it before your arrival here, we will attempt that exploit together; and even if I should have been able to visit it ere you come, I shall yet be glad to do so; for the pleasure of extraordinary sights, like all other pleasures, is doubled by the participation of a friend.

You wish for a copy of my little dog's eulogium, which I will therefore transcribe; but by so doing, I shall leave myself but scanty room for prose.

I shall be sorry if our neighbours at the Hall should have left it when we have the pleasure of seeing you. I want you to see them soon again, that a little *consuetudo* may wear off restraint; and you may be able to improve the advantage you have already gained in that quarter. I pitied you for the fears which deprived you of your uncle's company, and the more, having suffered so much by those fears myself. Fight against that vicious fear, for such it is, as strenuously as you can. It is the worst enemy that can attack a man destined to the forum—it ruined me. To associate as much as possible with the most respectable company, for good sense and good breeding, is, I believe, the only, at least I am sure it is the best remedy. The society of men of pleasure will not cure it, but rather leaves us more exposed to its influence in company of better persons.

Now for the Dog and the Water-lily.\*

W. C.

\* *Note by the Editor.*—As the poem inserted in this letter has been printed repeatedly, I shall here introduce in its stead two sprightly little poems on the same favourite spaniel, written, indeed, at a later period, but hitherto, I believe, unpublished.



## I.

*On a SPANIEL, called BEAU, killing a YOUNG BIRD.*

A Spaniel, Beau, that fares like you,  
Well-fed, and at his ease,  
Should wiser be than to pursue  
Each trifle that he sees.

But you have kill'd a tiny bird,  
Which flew not till to-day,  
Against my orders, whom you heard  
Forbidding you the prey.

Nor did you kill that you might eat,  
And ease a doggish pain,  
For him, though chas'd with furious heat,  
You left where he was slain.

Nor was he of the thievish sort,  
Or one whom blood allures,  
But innocent was all his sport  
Whom you have torn for yours.

My Dog! what remedy remains,  
Since, teach you all I can,  
I see you, after all my pains,  
So much resemble man?

## II.

## BEAU'S REPLY.

Sir! when I flew to seize the bird,  
In spite of your command,  
A louder voice than yours I heard,  
And harder to withstand:

You cried—"Forbear!"—but in my breast  
A mightier cried—"Proceed!"  
'Twas Nature, Sir, whose strong behest  
Impell'd me to the deed.

Yet much as Nature I respect,  
 I ventur'd once to break  
 (As you, perhaps, may recollect)  
 Her precept, for your sake :

And when your linnet, on a day,  
 Passing his prison door,  
 Had flutter'd all his strength away,  
 And panting, press'd the floor ;

Well knowing him a sacred thing,  
 Not destin'd to my tooth,  
 I only kiss'd his ruffled wing,  
 And lick'd his feathers smooth.

Let my obedience then excuse  
 My disobedience now !  
 Nor some reproof yourself refuse  
 From your aggriev'd Bow-wow !

If killing birds be such a crime,  
 (Which I can hardly see)  
 What think you, Sir, of killing time  
 With verse address'd to me ?

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LETTER CVI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

*Weston, Sept. 25, 1788.*

Say, what is the thing, by my riddle design'd,  
 Which you carried to London, and yet left behind?

I expect your answer, and without a fee. The half hour next before breakfast I devote to you: the moment Mrs. Unwin arrives in the study, be what I have written much or little, I shall make my bow, and take leave. If you live to be a Judge, as if I augur right you will, I shall expect to hear of a walking circuit.

I was shocked at what you tell me of. Superior talents, it seems, give no security for propriety of conduct; on the contrary, having a natural tendency to nourish pride, they often betray the possessor into such mistakes as men more moderately gifted never commit. Ability, therefore, is not wisdom; and an ounce of grace is a better guard against gross absurdity than the brightest talents in the world.

I rejoice that you are prepared for transcript work; here will be plenty for you. The day on which you shall receive this, I beg you will remember to drink one glass at least to the success of the *Iliad*, which I finished the day before yesterday, and yesterday began the *Odyssey*. It will be some time before I shall perceive myself travelling in another road; the objects around me are, at present, so much the same; Olympus and a council of gods meet me at my first entrance. To tell you the truth, I am weary of heroes and deities, and, with reverence be it spoken, shall be glad, for the variety sake, to exchange their company for that of a Cyclops.

Weston has not been without its tragedies since you left us: Mrs. Throckmorton's piping bulfinch has been eaten by a rat, and the villain left nothing but poor Bully's beak behind him. It will be a wonder if this event does not, at some convenient time, employ my versifying passion. Did ever fair lady, from the *Lesbia* of Catullus to the present day, lose her bird, and find no poet to commemorate the loss?

W. C.

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#### LETTER CVII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*Weston, Nov. 30, 1788.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your letter, accompanying the books with which you have favoured me, and for which I return you a thousand thanks, did not arrive till yesterday. I shall have great pleasure in taking, now and then, a peep at my old friend Vincent Bourne, the neatest of all men in his versification, though, when I was under his ushership at Westminster, the most slovenly in his person. He was so inattentive to his boys, and so indifferent whether they brought him good or bad exercises, or none at all, that he seemed determined, as he was the best, so to be the last Latin poet of the Westminster line; a plot which, I believe, he executed very successfully, for I have not heard of any who has at all deserved to be compared with him.

We have had hardly any rain or snow since you left us; the roads are accordingly as dry as in the middle of summer, and the opportunity of walking much more favourable. We have no season, in my mind, so pleasant as such a winter; and I account it particularly fortunate that such it proves, my cousin being with us. She is in good health, and cheerful; so are we all: and this I say, knowing you will be glad to hear it, for you have seen the time when this could not be said of all your friends at Weston. We shall rejoice to see you here at Christmas; but I recollect

When I hinted such an excursion by word of mouth, you gave me no great encouragement to expect you. Minds alter, and yours may be of the number of those that do so; and if it should, you will be entirely welcome to us all. Were there no other reason for your coming than merely the pleasure it will afford to us, that reason alone would be sufficient; but after so many toils, and with so many more in prospect, it seems essential to your well-being that you should allow yourself a respite, which, perhaps, you can take as comfortably, I am sure as quietly, here as any where.

The ladies beg to be remembered to you with all possible esteem and regard: they are just come down to breakfast, and being at this moment extremely talkative, oblige me to put an end to my letter. Adieu.

W. C.

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LETTER CVIII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*The Lodge, Jan. 19. 1789.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I have taken, since you went away, many of the walks which we have taken together, and none of them, I believe, without thoughts of you. I have, though not a good memory in general, yet a good local memory; and can recollect, by the help of a tree, or a stile, what you said on that particular spot. For this reason I purpose, when the summer is come, to walk with a book in my pocket: what I read at my fire-side I forget, but what I read under a hedge, or at the side of a pond, that pond and that hedge will always bring to my remembrance; and this is a sort of *memoria technica* which I would recommend to you, if I did not know that you have no occasion for it.

I am reading Sir John Hawkins, and still hold the same opinion of his book as when you were here. There are in it undoubtedly some awkwardnesses of phrase, and, which is worse, here and there some unequivocal indications of a vanity not easily pardonable in a man of his years; but, on the whole, I find it amusing, and to me at least, to whom every thing that has passed in the literary world within these five-and-twenty years is new, sufficiently replete with information. Mr. Throckmorton told me, about three days since, that it was lately recommended to him, by a sensible man, as a book that would give him great insight into the history of modern literature and modern men of letters; a commendation which I really think it merits. Fifty years hence, perhaps, the world will feel itself obliged to him.

W. C.

## LETTER CIX.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

MY DEAR SIR,

*The Lodge, Jan. 24, 1789.*

We have heard from my cousin in Norfolk-street; she reached home safely, and in good time. An observation suggests itself, which, though I have but little time for observation-making, I must allow myself time to mention. Accidents, as we call them, generally occur when there seems least reason to expect them: if a friend of ours travels far in indifferent roads, and at an unfavourable season, we are reasonably alarmed for the safety of one in whom we take so much interest; yet how seldom do we hear a tragical account of such a journey! It is, on the contrary, at home, in our yard or garden, perhaps in our parlour, that disaster finds us; in any place, in short, where we seem perfectly out of the reach of danger. The lesson inculcated by such a procedure on the part of Providence towards us, seems to be that of perpetual dependence.

Having preached this sermon, I must hasten to a close: you know that I am not idle, nor can I afford to be so: I would gladly spend more time with you, but by some means or other this day has hitherto proved a day of hindrance and confusion.

W. C.

## LETTER CX.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*The Lodge, May 20, 1789.*

MY DEAR SIR,

Finding myself, between twelve and one, at the end of the seventeenth book of the Odyssey, I give the interval between the present moment and the time of walking to you. If I write letters before I sit down to Homer, I feel my spirits too flat for poetry, and too flat for letter-writing if I address myself to Homer first; but the last I choose as the least evil, because my friends will pardon my dulness, but the public will not.

I had been some days uneasy on your account when yours arrived. We should have rejoiced to have seen you, would your engagements have permitted: but in the autumn, I hope, if not before, we shall have the pleasure to receive you. At what time we may expect Lady Hesketh at present I know not; but imagine that at any time after the month of June you will be sure to find her with us, which I mention, knowing that to meet you will add a relish to all the pleasures she can find at Weston.



When I wrote those lines on the Queen's visit, I thought I had performed well; but it belongs to me, as I have told you before, to dislike whatever I write when it has been written a month. The performance was, therefore, sinking in my esteem, when your approbation of it arriving in good time, buoyed it up again. It will now keep possession of the place it holds in my good opinion, because it has been favoured with yours; and a copy will certainly be at your service whenever you choose to have one.

Nothing is more certain than that when I wrote the line,

God made the country, and man made the town,

I had not the least recollection of that very similar one which you quote from Hawkins Brown. It convinces me that critics (and none more than Warton, in his Notes on Milton's minor Poems) have often charged authors with borrowing what they drew from their own fund. Brown was an entertaining companion when he had drank his bottle, but not before: this proved a snare to him, and he would sometimes drink too much; but I know not that he was chargeable with any other irregularities. He had those among his intimates, who would not have been such, had he been otherwise viciously inclined; the Duncombs, in particular, father and son, who were of unblemished morals. W. C.

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### ON THE QUEEN'S VISIT TO LONDON,

*The Night of the 17th March, 1789.*

When long sequester'd from his throne,  
George took his seat again,  
By right of worth, not blood alone,  
Entitled here to reign!

Then Loyalty, with all her lamps  
New trimm'd, a gallant show!  
Chasing the darkness, and the damps,  
Set London in a glow.

'Twas hard to tell, of streets, or squares,  
Which form'd the chief display,  
These most resembling cluster'd stars,  
Those the long milky way.

Bright shone the roofs, the domes, the spires,  
 And rockets flew, self-driven,  
 To hang their momentary fires  
 Amid the vault of heaven.

So, fire with water to compare,  
 The ocean serves on high,  
 Up-spouted by a whale in air,  
 T' express unwieldy joy.

Had all the pageants of the world  
 In one procession join'd,  
 And all the banners been unfurl'd  
 That heralds e'er design'd ;

For no such sight had England's Queen  
 Forsaken her retreat,  
 Where George recover'd made a scene  
 Sweet always, doubly sweet.

Yet glad she came that night to prove  
 A witness undescried,  
 How much the object of her love  
 Was lov'd by all beside.

Darkness the skies had mantled o'er,  
 In aid of her design—  
 Darkness, O Queen ! ne'er call'd before  
 To veil a deed of thine !

On borrow'd wheels away she flies,  
 Resolv'd to be unknown,  
 And gratify no curious eyes  
 That night, except her own.

Arriv'd, a night like noon she sees,  
 And hears the million hum ;  
 As all by instinct, like the bees,  
 Had known their sov'reign come.

Pleas'd she beheld aloft pourtray'd  
 On many a splendid wall,  
 Emblems of health, and heav'nly aid,  
 And George the theme of all.

Unlike the ænigmatic line,  
 So difficult to spell!  
 Which shook Belshazzar, at his wine,  
 The night his city fell.

Soon watery grew her eyes, and dim,  
 But with a joyful tear!  
 None else, except in pray'r for him,  
 George ever drew from her.

It was a scene in ev'ry part  
 Like that in fable feign'd,  
 And seem'd by some magician's art  
 Created, and sustain'd.

But other magic there she knew  
 Had been exerted, none,  
 To raise such wonders in her view,  
 Save love of George alone!

That cordial thought her spirit cheer'd,  
 And through the cumb'rous throng,  
 Not else unworthy to be fear'd,  
 Convey'd her calm along.

So, ancient poets say, serene  
 The sea-maid rides the waves,  
 And fearless of the billowy scene,  
 Her peaceful bosom laves.

With more than astronomick eyes  
 She view'd the sparkling show;  
 One Georgian Star adorns the skies—  
 She myriads found below.

Yet let the glories of a night  
 Like that, once seen, suffice!  
 Heav'n grant us no such future sight,  
 Such precious woe the price!

## LETTER CXI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

*The Lodge, June 5, 1789.*

I am going to give you a deal of trouble, but London folks must be content to be troubled by country folks; for in London only can our strange necessities be supplied. You must buy for me, if you please, a cuckow-clock; and now I will tell you where they are sold, which, Londoner as you are, it is possible you may not know. They are sold, I am informed, at more houses than one in that narrow part of Holborn which leads into Broad St. Giles'. It seems they are well-going clocks, and cheap, which are the two best recommendations of any clock. They are made in Germany, and such numbers of them are annually imported, that they are become even a considerable article of commerce.

I return you many thanks for Boswell's Tour. I read it to Mrs. Unwin after supper, and we find it amusing. There is much trash in it, as there must always be in every narrative that relates indiscriminately all that passed. But now and then the Doctor speaks like an oracle, and that makes amends for all. Sir John was a coxcomb, and Boswell is not less a coxcomb, though of another kind. I fancy Johnson made coxcombs of all his friends, and they, in return, made him a coxcomb; for, with reverence be it spoken, such he certainly was, and, flattered as he was, he was sure to be so.

Thanks for your invitation to London, but unless London can come to me, I fear we shall never meet. I was sure that you would love my friend when you should once be well acquainted with him; and equally sure that he would take kindly to you.

Now for Homer.

W. C.

## LETTER CXII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

AMICO MEO,

*The Lodge, June 20, 1789.*

I am truly sorry that it must be so long before we can have an opportunity to meet. My cousin, in her last letter but one, inspired me with other expectations, expressing a purpose, if the matter could be so contrived, of bringing you with her. I was willing to believe that you had consulted together on the subject, and found it feasible. A month was formerly a trifle in my account, but at my present age I give it all its importance, and grudge that so many months should yet pass in

which I have not even a glimpse of those I love; and of whom, the course of nature considered, I must ere long take leave for ever. But I shall live till August.

Many thanks for the cuckow, which arrived perfectly safe, and goes well, to the amusement and amazement of all who hear it. Hannah lies awake to hear it; and I am not sure that we have not others in the house that admire his music as much as she.

Having read both Hawkins and Boswell, I now think myself almost as much a master of Johnson's character as if I had known him personally; and cannot but regret, that our *bards of other times* found no such biographers as these. They have both been ridiculed, and the wits have had their laugh; but such an history of Milton or Shakspeare as they have given of Johnson—Oh, how desirable!

W. C.

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### LETTER CXIII.

To Mrs. THROCKMORTON.

July 18, 1789.

Many thanks, my dear Madam, for your extract from George's letter! I retain but little Italian; yet that little was so forcibly mustered, by the consciousness that I was myself the subject, that I presently became master of it. I have always said that George is a poet, and I am never in his company but I discover proofs of it; and the delicate address by which he has managed his complimentary mention of me, convinces me of it still more than ever. Here are a thousand poets of us who have impudence enough to write for the public; but amongst the modest men, who are by diffidence restrained from such an enterprize, are those who would eclipse us all. I wish that George would make the experiment: I would bind on his laurels with my own hand.

Your gardener has gone after his wife; but having neglected to take his lyre, *alias* fiddle, with him, has not yet brought home his Eurydice. Your clock in the hall has stopped; and, strange to tell, it stopped at sight of the watch-maker! For he only looked at it, and it has been motionless ever since. Mr. Gregson is gone, and the Hall is a desolation. Pray dont think any place pleasant that you may find in your rambles, that we may see you the sooner. Your aviary is all in good health. I pass it every day, and often inquire at the lattice; the inhabitants of it send their duty, and wish for your return. I took notice of the inscription on your seal, and had we an artist here capable of furnishing me with another, you should read on mine, "Encore une lettre."

Adieu.

W. C.



## LETTER CXIV.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*The Lodge, July 23, 1789.*

You do well, my dear Sir, to improve your opportunity: to speak in the rural phrase, this is your sowing time, and the sheaves you look for can never be yours unless you make that use of it. The colour of our whole life is generally such as the three or four first years, in which we are our own masters, make it. Then it is that we may be said to shape our own destiny, and to treasure up for ourselves a series of future successes or disappointments. Had I employed my time as wisely as you, in a situation very similar to yours, I had never been a poet perhaps, but I might by this time have acquired a character of more importance in society, and a situation in which my friends would have been better pleased to see me. But three years mis-spent in an attorney's office, were almost of course followed by several more equally mis-spent in the temple; and the consequence has been, as the Italian epitaph says, "*Sto qui.*" The only use I can make of myself now, at least the best, is to serve *in terrorem* to others, when occasion may happen to offer, that they may escape (so far as my admonitions can have any weight with them) my folly and my fate. When you feel yourself tempted to relax a little of the strictness of your present discipline, and to indulge in amusement incompatible with your future interests, think on your friend at Weston.

Having said this, I shall next, with my whole heart, invite you hither, and assure you that I look forward to approaching August with great pleasure; because it promises me your company. After a little time (which we shall wish longer) spent with us, you will return invigorated to your studies, and pursue them with the more advantage. In the mean time you have lost little, in point of season, by being confined to London. Incessant rains, and meadows under water, have given to the summer the air of winter, and the country has been deprived of half its beauties.

It is time to tell you that we are all well, and often make you our subject. This is the third meeting that my cousin and we have had in this country; and a great instance of good fortune I account it, in such a world as this, to have expected such a pleasure thrice without being once disappointed. Add to this wonder as soon as you can, by making yourself of the party.

W. C.

## LETTER CXV.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*Weston, August 8, 1789.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Come when you will, or when you can, you cannot come at a wrong time; but we shall expect you on the day mentioned.

If you have any book that you think will make pleasant evening reading, bring it with you. I now read Mrs. Piozzi's Travels to the ladies after supper, and shall probably have finished them before we shall have the pleasure of seeing you. It is the fashion, I understand, to condemn them. But we, who make books ourselves, are more merciful to book-makers. I would that every fastidious judge of authors were himself obliged to write: there goes more to the composition of a volume than many critics imagine. I have often wondered that the same poet who wrote the Dunciad should have written these lines—

“The mercy I to others show,

“That mercy show to me.”

Alas! for Pope, if the mercy he showed to others was the measure of the mercy he received! He was the less pardonable too, because experienced in all the difficulties of composition.

I scratch this between dinner and tea; a time when I cannot write much without disordering my noddle, and bringing a flush into my face. You will excuse me, therefore, if, through respect for the two important considerations of health and beauty, I conclude myself

Ever yours,

W. C.

## LETTER CXVI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*Weston, Sept. 24, 1789.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You left us exactly at the wrong time. Had you staid till now, you would have had the pleasure of hearing even my cousin say, “I am cold;” and the still greater pleasure of being warm yourself; for I have had a fire in the study ever since you went. It is the fault of our summers that they are hardly ever warm or cold enough. Were they warmer we should not want a fire, and were they colder we should have one.

I have twice seen and conversed with Mr. J——. He is witty, intelligent, and agreeable beyond the common measure of men who are so. But it is the constant effect of a spirit of party to make those hateful to each other who are truly amiable in themselves.

Beau sends his love; he was melancholy the whole day after your departure.

W. C.

LETTER CXVII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*Weston, Sept. 11, 1788.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The hamper is come, and come safe; and the contents I can affirm, on my own knowledge, are excellent. It chanced that another hamper and a box came by the same conveyance, all which I unpacked and expounded in the hall; my cousin sitting mean time on the stairs, spectatress of the business. We diverted ourselves with imagining the manner in which Homer would have described the scene. Detailed in his circumstantial way, it would have furnished materials for a paragraph of considerable length in an *Odyssey*.

The straw-stuff'd hamper with his ruthless steel  
 He open'd, cutting sheer th' inserted cords  
 Which bound the lid and lip secure. Forth came  
 The rustling package first, bright straw of wheat,  
 Or oats, or barley; next a bottle green  
 Throat-full, clear spirits the contents, distill'd  
 Drop after drop odorous, by the art  
 Of the fair mother of his friend—the Rose.

And so on.

I should rejoice to be the hero of such a tale in the hands of Homer.

You will remember, I trust, that when the state of your health or spirits calls for rural walks and fresh air, you have always a retreat at *Weston*.

We are all well, all love you, down to the very dog; and shall be glad to hear that you have exchanged languor for alacrity, and the debility that you mention, for indefatigable vigour.

Mr. Throckmorton has made me a handsome present: *Villoison's* edition of the *Iliad*, elegantly bound by *Edwards*. If I live long enough, by the contributions of my friends, I shall once more be possessed of a library.

W. C.

LETTER CXVIII.  
To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

Dec. 18, 1789.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The present appears to me a wonderful period in the history of mankind. That nations so long contentedly slaves should, on a sudden, become enamoured of liberty, and understand, as suddenly, their own natural right to it, feeling themselves, at the same time, inspired with resolution to assert it, seems difficult to account for from natural causes. With respect to the final issue of all this, I can only say, that if, having discovered the value of liberty, they should next discover the value of peace, and, lastly, the value of the word of God, they will be happier than they ever were since the rebellion of the first pair, and as happy as it is possible they should be in the present life.

Most sincerely yours,

W. C.

LETTER CXIX.  
To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*The Lodge, Jan. 3, 1790.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I have been long silent, but you have had the charity, I hope and believe, not to ascribe my silence to a wrong cause. The truth is, I have been too busy to write to any body, having been obliged to give my early mornings to the revision and correction of a little volume of Hymns for Children, written by, I know not whom. This task I finished but yesterday, and while it was in hand, wrote only to my cousin, and to her rarely. From her, however, I knew that you would hear of my well-being, which made me less anxious about my debts to you than I could have been otherwise.

I am almost the only person at Weston, known to you, who have enjoyed tolerable health this winter. In your next letter give us some account of your own state of health, for I have had my anxieties about you. The winter has been mild; but our winters are, in general, such, that when a friend leaves us in the beginning of that season, I always feel in my heart a *perhaps*, importing that we have possibly met for the last time, and that the robins may whistle on the grave of one of us before the return of summer.

I am still thrumming Homer's lyre; that is to say, I am still employed in my last revision; and to give you some idea of the intenseness of my toils, I will inform you that it cost me all the

morning yesterday, and all the evening, to translate a single simile to my mind. The transitions from one member of the subject to another, though easy and natural in the Greek, turn out often so intolerably awkward in an English version, that almost endless labour, and no little address, are requisite to give them grace and elegance. I forget if I told you that your German Clavis has been of considerable use to me. I am indebted to it for a right understanding of the manner in which Achilles prepared pork, mutton, and goat's flesh for the entertainment of his friends, in the night when they came deputed by Agamemnon to negotiate a reconciliation: a passage of which nobody in the world is perfectly master, myself only and Schaufelbergerus excepted, nor ever was, except when Greek was a *live* language.

I do not know whether my cousin has told you or not, how I brag in my letters to her concerning my translation; perhaps her modesty feels more for me than mine for myself, and she would blush to let even you know the degree of my self-conceit on that subject. I will tell you, however, expressing myself as decently as vanity will permit, that it has undergone such a change for the better in this revival, that I have much warmer hopes of success than formerly.

W. C.

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LETTER CXX.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, Jan. 23, 1790.*

MY DEAR COZ.

I had a letter yesterday from the wild boy Johnson, for whom I have conceived a great affection. It was just such a letter as I like, of the true helter-skelter kind; and though he writes a remarkable good hand, scribbled with such rapidity, that it was barely legible. He gave me a droll account of the adventures of Lord Howard's note, and of his own in pursuit of it. The poem he brought me came as from Lord Howard, with his Lordship's request that I would revise it. It is in the form of a pastoral, and is entitled, "*Tale of the Lute, or, the Beauties of Audley End.*" I read it attentively; was much pleased with part of it, and part of it I equally disliked. I told him so, and in such terms as one naturally uses when there seems to be no occasion to qualify, or to alleviate censure. I observed him afterwards somewhat more thoughtful and silent, but occasionally as pleasant as usual; and in Kilwick-wood, where we walked the next day, the truth came out, that he was himself the author, and that Lord Howard, not approving it altogether, and several friends of his



own age, to whom he had shown it, differing from his Lordship in opinion, and being highly pleased with it, he had come at last to a resolution to abide by my judgment; a measure to which Lord Howard by all means advised him. He accordingly brought it, and will bring it again in the summer, when we shall lay our heads together, and try to mend it.

I have lately had a letter also from Mrs. King, to whom, indeed, I had written to inquire whether she were living or dead; she tells me, the critics expect from my Homer every thing in some parts, and that, in others, I shall fall short. These are the Cambridge critics; and she has her intelligence from the botanical professor, Martyn. That gentleman, in reply, answers them, that I shall fall short in nothing, but shall disappoint them all. It shall be my endeavour to do so, and I am not without hope of succeeding.

W. C.

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LETTER CXXI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*The Lodge, Feb. 2, 1790.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Should Heyne's Homer appear before mine, which I hope is not probable, and should he adopt in it the opinion of Bentley, that the whole last Odyssey is spurious, I will dare to contradict both him and the Doctor. I am only in part of Bentley's mind (if indeed his mind were such) in this matter, and, giant as he was in learning, and eagle-eyed in criticism, am persuaded, convinced, and sure, (can I be more positive?) that, except from the moment when the Ithacans begin to meditate an attack on the cottage of Laertes, and thence to the end, that book is the work of Homer. From the moment aforesaid I yield the point, or rather have never, since I had any skill in Homer, felt myself at all inclined to dispute it. But I believe perfectly, at the same time, that, Homer himself alone excepted, the Greek poet never existed who could have written the speeches made by the shade of Agamemnon; in which there is more insight into the human heart discovered than I ever saw in any other work, unless in Shakspeare's. I am equally disposed to fight for the whole passage that describes Laertes, and the interview between him and Ulysses. Let Bentley grant these to Homer, and I will shake hands with him as to all the rest. The battle with which the book concludes is, I think, a paltry battle, and there is a huddle in the management of it, altogether unworthy of my favourite, and the favourite of all ages.

If you should happen to fall into company with Dr. Warton again, you will not, I dare say, forget to make him my respectful compliments, and to assure him that I felt myself not a little flattered by the favourable mention he was pleased to make of me and my labours. The poet who pleases a man like him has nothing left to wish for. I am glad that you were pleased with my young cousin Johnson; he is a boy, and bashful, but has great merit in respect both of character and intellect. So far at least as in a week's knowledge of him I could possibly learn, he is very amiable and very sensible, and inspired me with a warm wish to know him better.

W. C.

### LETTER CXXII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, Feb. 9, 1790.*

I have sent you lately scraps instead of letters, having had occasion to answer immediately on the receipt, which always happens when I am *deest in Homer*.

I knew, when I recommended Johnson to you, that you would find some way to serve him, and so it has happened; for, notwithstanding your own apprehensions to the contrary, you have already procured him a chaplainship. This is pretty well, considering that it is an early day, and that you have but just begun to know that there is such a man under heaven. I had rather myself be patronized by a person of small interest, with a heart like yours, than by the Chancellor himself, if he did not care a farthing for me.

If I did not desire you to make my acknowledgments to Anonymous, as I believe I did not, it was because I am not aware that I am warranted to do so. But the omission is of less consequence, because, whoever he is, though he has no objection to doing the kindest things, he seems to have an aversion to the thanks they merit.

You must know, that two Odes, composed by Horace, have lately been discovered at Rome: I wanted them transcribed into the blank leaves of a little Horace of mine, and Mrs. Throckmorton performed that service for me: in a blank leaf, therefore, of the same book, I wrote the following.

W. C.

To Mrs. THROCKMORTON,

*On her beautiful Transcript of Horace's Ode, Ad librum suum.*

Maria, could Horace have guess'd  
 What honours awaited his Ode,  
 To his own little volume address'd,  
 The honour which you have bestow'd;  
 Who have trac'd it in characters here,  
 So elegant, even, and neat;  
 He had laugh'd at the critical sneer  
 Which he seems to have trembled to meet.

And sneer, if you please, he had said,  
 Hereafter a nymph shall arise,  
 Who shall give me, when you are all dead,  
 The glory your malice denies;  
 Shall dignity give to my lay,  
 Although but a mere bagatelle;  
 And even a poet shall say,  
 Nothing ever was written so well.

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LETTER CXXIII.  
 To Lady HESKETH.

*Feb. 26, 1796.*

You have set my heart at ease, my cousin, so far as you were yourself the object of its anxieties. What other troubles it feels can be cured by God alone. But you are never silent a week longer than usual, without giving an opportunity to my imagination (ever fruitful in flowers of a sable hue) to teaze me with them day and night. London is, indeed, a pestilent place, as you call it, and I would, with all my heart, that thou hadst less to do with it: were you under the same roof with me, I should know you to be safe, and should never distress you with melancholy letters.

I feel myself well enough inclined to the measure you propose, and will show to your new acquaintance, with all my heart, a sample of my translation. But it shall not be, if you please, taken from the *Odyssey*. It is a poem of a gentler character than the *Iliad*, and as I propose to carry her by a *coup de main*, I shall employ Achilles, Agamemnon, and the two armies of Greece and Troy, in my service. I will accordingly send you, in the box that I re-

ceived from you last night, the two first books of the Iliad, for that lady's perusal: to those I have given a third revisal; for them, therefore, I will be answerable, and am not afraid to stake the credit of my work upon *them* with her, or with any living wight, especially one who understands the original. I do not mean that even they are finished; for I shall examine and cross-examine them yet again, and so you may tell her; but I know that they will not disgrace me; whereas it is so long since I have looked at the Odyssey, that I know nothing at all about it. They shall set sail from Olney on Monday morning in the Diligence, and will reach you, I hope, in the evening. As soon as she is done with them, I shall be glad to have them again; for the time draws near when I shall want to give them the last touch.

I am delighted with Mrs. Bodham's kindness in giving me the only picture of my own mother that is to be found, I suppose, in all the world. I had rather possess it than the richest jewel in the British crown, for I loved her with an affection that her death, fifty-two years since, has not in the least abated. I remember her too, young as I was, when she died, well enough to know that it is a very exact resemblance of her, and, as such, it is to me invaluable. Every body loved her, and, with an amiable character so impressed on all her features, every body was sure to do so.

I have a very affectionate, and a very clever letter from Johnson, who promises me the transcript of the books entrusted to him in a few days. I have a great love for that young man; he has some drops of the same stream in his veins that once animated the original of that dear picture.

W. C.

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LETTER CXXIV.

To Mrs. BODHAM.

*Weston, Feb. 27, 1790.*

MY DEAREST ROSE,

Whom I thought withered, and fallen from the stalk, but whom I find still alive: nothing could give me greater pleasure than to know it, and to learn it from yourself. I loved you dearly when you were a child, and love you not a jot the less for having ceased to be so. Every creature that bears any affinity to my own mother is dear to me, and you, the daughter of her brother, are but one remove distant from her: I love you, therefore, and love you much, both for her sake and for your own. The world could not have furnished you with a present so acceptable to me as the picture which you have so kindly sent me. I received it the night before last, and viewed it with a trepidation



of nerves and spirits somewhat akin to what I should have felt had the dear original presented herself to my embraces. I kissed it, and hung it where it is the last object that I see at night, and, of course, the first on which I open my eyes in the morning. She died when I had completed my sixth year, yet I remember her well, and am an ocular witness of the great fidelity of the copy. I remember, too, a multitude of the maternal tendernesses which I received from her, and which have endeared her memory to me beyond expression. There is in me, I believe, more of the *Donne* than of the *Cowper*, and though I love all of both names, and have a thousand reasons to love those of my own name, yet I feel the bond of nature draw me vehemently to your side. I was thought, in the days of my childhood, much to resemble my mother; and, in my natural temper, of which, at the age of fifty-eight, I must be supposed a competent judge, can trace both her and my late uncle, your father. Somewhat of his irritability, and a little, I would hope, both of his and of her ——, I know not what to call it, without seeming to praise myself, which is not my intention; but, speaking to *you*, I will even speak out, and say *good-nature*. Add to all this, I deal much in poetry, as did our venerable ancestor, the Dean of St. Paul's, and I think I shall have proved myself a *Donne* at all points. The truth is, that whatever I am, I love you all.

I account it a happy event that brought the dear boy, your nephew, to my knowledge, and that, breaking through all the restraints which his natural bashfulness imposed on him, he determined to find me out. He is amiable to a degree that I have seldom seen, and I often long with impatience to see him again.

My dearest cousin, what shall I say in answer to your affectionate invitation? I *must* say this, I cannot come now, nor soon, and I wish, with all my heart, I could. But I will tell you what may be done, perhaps, and it will answer to us just as well: you and Mr. Bodham can come to Weston, can you not? The summer is at hand; there are roads and wheels to bring you, and you are neither of you translating Homer. I am crazed that I cannot ask you altogether, for want of house-room, but for Mr. Bodham and yourself we have good room, and equally good for any third in the shape of a *Donne*, whether named Hewitt, Bodham, Balls, or Johnson, or by whatever name distinguished. Mrs. Hewitt has particular claims upon me; she was my play-fellow at Berkhamstead, and has a share in my warmest affections. Pray tell her so. Neither do I at all forget my cousin Harriet. She and I have been many a time merry at Catfield, and have made the parsonage ring with laughter. Give my love to her. Assure yourself, my dearest



cousin, that I shall receive you as if you were my sister, and Mrs. Unwin is, for my sake, prepared to do the same. When she has seen you, she will love you for your own.

I am much obliged to Mr. Bodham for his kindness to my Homer, and with my love to you all, and with Mrs. Unwin's kind respects, am, my dear, dear Rose, ever yours, W. C.

*P. S.* I mourn the death of your poor brother Castres, whom I should have seen had he lived, and should have seen with the greatest pleasure. He was an amiable boy, and I was very fond of him.

*Still another P. S.*—I find, on consulting Mrs. Unwin, that I have under-rated our capabilities, and that we have not only room for you and Mr. Bodham, but for two of your sex, and even for your nephew into the bargain. We shall be happy to have it all so occupied.

Your nephew tells me that his sister, in the qualities of the mind, resembles you; that is enough to make her dear to me, and I beg you will assure her that she is so. Let it not be long before I hear from you.

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#### LETTER CXXV.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire,

*Weston, Feb. 28, 1790.*

MY DEAR COUSIN JOHN,

I have much wished to hear from you, and though you are welcome to write to Mrs. Unwin as often as you please, I wish myself to be numbered among your correspondents.

I shall find time to answer you, doubt it not! Be as busy as we may, we can always find time to do what is agreeable to us. By the way, had you a letter from Mrs. Unwin? I am witness that she addressed one to you before you went into Norfolk; but your mathematico-poetical head forgot to acknowledge the receipt of it.

I was never more pleased in my life than to learn, and to learn from herself, that my dearest Rose\* is still alive. Had she not engaged me to love her by the sweetness of her character when a child, she would have done it effectually now, by making me the most acceptable present in the world—my own dear mother's picture. I am, perhaps, the only person living who remembers her, but I remember her well, and can attest, on my own knowledge, the truth of the resemblance. Amiable and elegant as the coun-

\* Mrs. Ann Bodham.

tenance is, such exactly was her own: she was one of the tenderest parents, and so just a copy of her is, therefore, to me invaluable.

I wrote yesterday to my Rose, to tell her all this, and to thank her for her kindness in sending it; neither do I forget your kindness who intimated to her that I should be happy to possess it.

She invites me into Norfolk; but, alas! she might as well invite the house in which I dwell; for, all other considerations and impediments apart, how is it possible that a translator of Homer should lumber to such a distance? But though I cannot comply with her kind invitation, I have made myself the best amends in my power, by inviting her, and all the family of Dennes, to Weston. Perhaps we could not accommodate them all at once, but in succession we could; and can at any time find room for five, three of them being females, and one a married one. You are a mathematician; tell me, then, how five persons can be lodged in three beds, two males and three females; and I shall have good hope that you will proceed a senior optime. It would make me happy to see our house so furnished. As to yourself, whom I know to be a *subscalarian*, or a man that sleeps under the stairs, I should have no objection at all, neither could you possibly have any yourself, to the garret, as a place in which you might be disposed of with great felicity of accommodation.

I thank you much for your services in the transcribing way, and would by no means have you despair of an opportunity to serve me in the same way yet again. Write to me soon, and tell me when I shall see you.

I have not said the half that I have to say; but breakfast is at hand, which always terminates my epistles.

What have you done with your poem? The trimming that it procured you here has not, I hope, put you out of conceit with it entirely; you are more than equal to the alteration that it needs. Only remember, that in writing, perspicuity is always more than half the battle. The want of it is the ruin of more than half the poetry that is published. A meaning that does not stare you in the face is as bad as no meaning, because nobody will take the pains to poke for it. So now adieu for the present. Beware of killing yourself with problems, for if you do you will never live to be another Sir Isaac.

Mrs. Unwin's affectionate remembrances attend you; Lady Hesketh is much disposed to love you; perhaps most who know you have some little tendency the same way.

W. C.

## LETTER CXXVI.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, March 8, 1790.*

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

I thank thee much, and oft, for negotiating so well this poetical concern with Mrs. —, and for sending me her opinion in her own hand. I should be unreasonable indeed, not to be highly gratified by it; and I like it the better for being modestly expressed. It is, as you know, and it shall be some months longer, my daily business to polish and improve what is done, that, when the whole shall appear, she may find her expectations answered. I am glad also that thou didst send her the sixteenth *Odyssey*, though, as I said before, I know not at all, at present, whereof it is made; but I am sure that thou wouldst not have sent it, hadst thou not conceived a good opinion of it thyself, and thought that it would do me credit. It was very kind in thee to sacrifice to this *Minerva* on my account.

For my sentiments on the subject of the test act, I cannot do better than refer thee to my poem, entitled and called “*Expostulation*.” I have there expressed myself not much in its favour, considering it in a religious view; and in a political one I like it not a jot the better. I am neither tory nor high churchman, but an old whig, as my father was before me, and an enemy, consequently, to all tyrannical impositions.

Mrs. Unwin bids me return thee many thanks for thy inquiries so kindly made concerning her health. She is a little better than of late, but has been ill continually ever since last November. Every thing that could try patience and submission she has had, and her submission and patience have answered in the trial, though mine, on her account, have often failed sadly.

I have a letter from Johnson, who tells me that he has sent his transcript to you, begging, at the same time, more copy. Let him have it by all means; he is an industrious youth, and I love him dearly. I told him that you are disposed to love him a little. A new poem is born on the receipt of my mother’s picture. Thou shalt have it.

W. C.

## LETTER CXXVII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*The Lodge, March 11, 1790.*

I was glad to hear from you, for a line from you gives me always much pleasure, but was not much glad-

flened by the contents of your letter. The state of your health, which I have learned more accurately, perhaps, from my cousin, except in this last instance, than from yourself, has rather alarmed me; and even she has collected her information upon that subject more from your looks than from your own acknowledgments. To complain much, and often, of our indispositions, does not always insure the pity of the hearer, perhaps sometimes forfeits it; but to dissemble them altogether, or, at least, to suppress the worst, is attended, ultimately, with an inconvenience greater still; the secret will out at last, and our friends, unprepared to receive it, are doubly distressed about us. In saying this I squint a little at Mrs. Unwin, who will read it: it is with her, as with you, the only subject on which she practises any dissimulation at all: the consequence is, that when she is much indisposed I never believe myself in possession of the whole truth, live in constant expectation of hearing something worse, and, at the long run, am seldom disappointed. It seems, therefore, as on all other occasions, so even in this, the better course, on the whole, to appear what we are, not to lay the fears of our friends asleep by cheerful looks which do not properly belong to us, or by letters written as if we were well, when, in fact, we are very much otherwise. On condition, however, that you act differently toward me for the future, I will pardon the past, and she may gather, from my clemency shown to you, some hopes, on the same conditions, of similar clemency to herself.

W. C.

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 LETTER CXXVIII.

To Mrs. THROCKMORTON.

*The Lodge, March 21, 1790.*

MY DEAREST MADAM,

I shall only observe, on the subject of your absence, that you have stretched it since you went, and have made it a week longer. Weston is sadly *unked* without you; and here are two of us who will be heartily glad to see you again. I believe you are happier at home than any where, which is a comfortable belief to your neighbours, because it affords assurance that, since you are neither likely to ramble for pleasure, nor to meet with any avocations of business, while Weston shall continue to be your home, it will not often want you.

The two first books of my Iliad have been submitted to the inspection and scrutiny of a great critic of your sex, at the instance of my cousin, as you may suppose. The lady is mistress of more tongues than a few, (it is to be hoped she is single) and particu-



larly she is mistress of the Greek. She returned them with expressions that, if any thing could make a poet prouder than all poets naturally are, would have made me so. I tell you this because I know that you all interest yourselves in the success of the said Iliad.

My periwig is arrived, and is the very perfection of all periwigs, having only one fault, which is, that my head will only go into the first half of it, the other half, or the upper part of it, continuing still unoccupied. My artist in this way at Olney has, however, undertaken to make the whole of it tenantable; and then I shall be twenty years younger than you have ever seen me.

I heard of your birth-day very early in the morning: the news came from the steeple.

W. C.

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LETTER CXXIX.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, March 22, 1790.*

I rejoice, my dearest cousin, that my MSS. have roamed the earth so successfully, and have met with no disaster. The single book excepted that went to the bottom of the Thames, and rose again, they have been fortunate without exception. I am not superstitious, but have, nevertheless, as good a right to believe that adventure an omen, and a favourable one, as Swift had to interpret as he did the loss of a fine fish, which he had no sooner laid on the bank than it flounced into the water again. This, he tells us himself, he always considered as a type of his future disappointments; and why may I not as well consider the marvellous recovery of my lost book from the bottom of the Thames as typical of its future prosperity? To say the truth, I have no fears now about the success of my translation, though in time past I have had many. I knew there was a style somewhere, could I but find it, in which Homer ought to be rendered, and which alone would suit him. Long time I blundered about it, ere I could attain to any decided judgment on the matter. At first I was betrayed, by a desire of accommodating my language to the simplicity of his, into much of the quaintness that belonged to our writers of the fifteenth century. In the course of many revisions I have delivered myself from this evil, I believe, entirely; but I have done it slowly, and as a man separates himself from his mistress when he is going to marry. I had so strong a predilection in favour of this style at first, that I was crazed to find that others were not so much enamoured with it as myself. At every passage



of that sort which I obliterated I groaned bitterly, and said to myself, I am spoiling my work to please those who have no taste for the simple graces of antiquity. But in measure, as I adopted a more modern phraseology, I became a convert to their opinion; and in the last revisal, which I am now making, am not sensible of having spared a single expression of the obsolete kind. I see my work so much improved by this alteration, that I am filled with wonder at my own backwardness to assent to the necessity of it; and the more, when I consider that Milton, with whose manner I account myself intimately acquainted, is never quaint, never twangs through the nose, but is every where grand and elegant, without resorting to musty antiquity for his beauties. On the contrary, he took a long stride forward, left the language of his own day far behind him, and anticipated the expressions of a century yet to come.

I have now, as I said, no longer any doubt of the event, but I will give thee a shilling if thou wilt tell me what I shall say in my preface. It is an affair of much delicacy, and I have as many opinions about it as there are whims in a weather-cock.

Send my MSS. and thine when thou wilt. In a day or two I shall enter on the last Iliad. When I have finished it I shall give the Odyssey one more reading, and shall, therefore, shortly have occasion for the copy in thy possession; but you see that there is no need to hurry.

I leave the little space for Mrs. Unwin's use, who means, I believe, to occupy it, and am evermore thine most truly.

W. C.

Postscript in the hand of Mrs. Unwin.

You cannot imagine how much your ladyship would oblige your unworthy servant, if you would be so good to let me know in what point I differ from you. All that at present I can say is, that I will readily sacrifice my own opinion, unless I can give you a substantial reason for adhering to it.

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#### LETTER CXXX.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

*Weston, March 23, 1790.*

Your MSS. arrived safe in New Norfolk Street, and I am much obliged to you for your labours. Were you now at Weston I could furnish you with employment for some weeks, and shall perhaps be equally able to do it in summer, for I have lost my best amanuensis in this place, Mr. George Throckmorton, who is gone to Bath.

You are a man to be envied, who have never read the *Odyssey*, which is one of the most amusing story-books in the world. There is also much of the finest poetry in the world to be found in it, notwithstanding all that Longinus has insinuated to the contrary. His comparison of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to the meridian, and to the declining sun, is pretty, but, I am persuaded, not just. The prettiness of it seduced him; he was otherwise too judicious a reader of Homer to have made it. I can find in the latter no symptoms of impaired ability; none of the effects of age: on the contrary, it seems to me a certainty, that Homer, had he written the *Odyssey* in his youth, could not have written it better; and if the *Iliad* in his old age, that he would have written it just as well. A critic would tell me, that instead of *written* I should have said *composed*. Very likely—but I am not writing to one of that snarling generation.

My boy, I long to see thee again. It has happened some way or other, that Mrs. Unwin and I have conceived a great affection for thee. That I should, is the less to be wondered at, because thou art a shred of my own mother; neither is the wonder great, that she should fall into the same predicament; for she loves every thing that I love. You will observe, that your own personal right to be beloved makes no part of the consideration. There is nothing that I touch with so much tenderness as the vanity of a young man; because I know how extremely susceptible he is of impressions that might hurt him in that particular part of his composition. If you should ever prove a coxcomb, from which character you stand just now at a greater distance than any young man I know, it shall never be said that I have made you one; no, you will gain nothing by me but the honour of being much valued by a poor poet, who can do you no good while he lives, and has nothing to leave you when he dies. If you can be contented to be dear to me on these conditions, so you shall; but other terms, more advantageous than these, or more inviting, none have I to propose.

Farewell. Puzzle not yourself about a subject when you write to either of us; every thing is subject enough from those we love.

W. C.

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LETTER CXXXI.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

*Weston, April 17, 1790.*

Your letter, that now lies before me, is almost three weeks old, and therefore of full age to receive an answer, which it shall have without delay, if the interval between

the present moment and that of breakfast should prove sufficient for the purpose.

Yours to Mrs. Unwin was received yesterday, for which she will thank you in due time. I have also seen, and have now in my desk, your letter to Lady Hesketh; she sent it thinking that it would divert me; in which she was not mistaken. I shall tell her when I write to her next, that you long to receive a line from her. Give yourself no trouble on the subject of the politic device you saw good to recur to, when you presented me with your manuscript; it was an innocent deception, at least it could harm nobody save yourself; an effect which it did not fail to produce: and since the punishment followed it so closely, by me at least it may very well be forgiven. You ask, how I can tell that you are not addicted to practices of the deceptive kind? And certainly, if the little time that I have had to study you were alone to be considered, the question would not be unreasonable; but, in general, a man who reaches my years, finds that

“ Long experience does attain

“ To something like prophetic strain.”

I am very much of Lavater's opinion, and persuaded that faces are as legible as books; only with these circumstances to recommend them to our perusal, that they are read in much less time, and are much less likely to deceive us. Yours gave me a favourable impression of you the moment I beheld it; and though I shall not tell you in particular what I saw in it, for reasons mentioned in my last, I will add, that I have observed in you nothing since that has not confirmed the opinion I then formed in your favour. In fact, I cannot recollect that my skill in physiognomy has ever deceived me, and I should add more on this subject had I room.

When you have shut up your mathematical books, you must give yourself to the study of Greek; not merely that you may be able to read Homer, and the other Greek Classics, with ease, but the Greek Testament and the Greek Fathers also. Thus qualified, and by the aid of your fiddle into the bargain, together with some portion of the grace of God (without which nothing can be done) to enable you to look well to your flock, when you shall get one, you will be well set up for a parson. In which character, if I live to see you in it, I shall expect and hope that you will make a very different figure from most of your fraternity.

Ever yours,

W. C.

## LETTER CXXXII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, April 19, 1790.*

MY DEAREST COZ.

I thank thee for my cousin Johnson's letter, which diverted me. I had one from him lately, in which he expressed an ardent desire of a line from you, and the delight he would feel on receiving it. I know not whether you will have the charity to satisfy his longings, but mention the matter, thinking it possible that you may. A letter from a lady to a youth immersed in mathematics must be singularly pleasant.

I am finishing Homer backward, having begun at the last book, and designing to persevere in that crab-like fashion till I arrive at the first. This may remind you, perhaps, of a certain poet's prisoner in the bastile (thank Heaven! in the bastile now no more) counting the nails in the door, for variety's sake, in all directions. I find so little to do in the last revisal, that I shall soon reach the Odyssey, and soon want those books of it which are in thy possession; but the two first of the Iliad, which are also in thy possession, much sooner: thou mayest, therefore, send them by the first fair opportunity. I am in high spirits on this subject, and think that I have at last licked the clumsy cub into a shape that will secure to it the favourable notice of the public. Let not — retard me, and I shall hope to get it out next winter.

I am glad that thou hast sent the General those verses on my mother's picture. They will amuse him; only I hope that he will not miss my mother-in-law, and think that she ought to have made a third. On such an occasion it was not possible to mention her with any propriety. I rejoice at the General's recovery; may it prove a perfect one.

W. C.

## LETTER CXXXIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, April 30, 1790.*

To my old friend, Dr. Madan, thou couldst not have spoken better than thou didst. Tell him, I beseech you, that I have not forgotten him; tell him also, that to my heart and home he will be always welcome; nor he only, but all that are his. His judgment of my translation gave me the highest satisfaction, because I know him to be a rare old Grecian.

The General's approbation of my picture verses gave me also



much pleasure. I wrote them not without tears; therefore I presume it may be that they are felt by others. Should he offer me my father's picture, I shall gladly accept it. A melancholy pleasure is better than none, nay, verily, better than most. He had a sad task imposed on him; but no man could acquit himself of such a one with more discretion or with more tenderness. The death of the unfortunate young man reminded me of those lines in Lycidas:

“ It was that fatal and perfidious bark,  
 “ Built in the eclipse, and rigg'd with curses dark,  
 “ That sunk so low that sacred head of thine!”

How beautiful!

W. C.

#### LETTER CXXXIV.

To Mrs. THROCKMORTON.

*The Lodge, May 10, 1790.*

My dear Mrs. Frog,\* you have by this time, I presume, heard from the Doctor; whom I desired to present to you our best affections, and to tell you that we are well. He sent an urchin (I do not mean a hedge-hog, commonly called an urchin in old times, but a boy, commonly so called at present), expecting that he would find you at Buckland's, whither he supposed you gone on Thursday. He sent him charged with divers articles, and among others with letters, or at least with a letter; which I mention, that, if the boy should be lost, together with his dispatches, past all possibility of recovery, you may yet know that the Doctor stands acquitted of not writing. That he is utterly lost (that is to say, the boy—for, the Doctor being the last antecedent, as the grammarians say, you might otherwise suppose that he was intended) is the more probable, because he was never four miles from his home before, having only travelled at the side of a plough-team; and when the Doctor gave him his direction to Buckland's, he asked, very naturally, if that place was in England. So, what has become of him, Heaven knows.

I do not know that any adventures have presented themselves since your departure worth mentioning, except that the rabbit that infested your wilderness has been shot for devouring your carnations; and that I myself have been in some danger of being devoured, in like manner, by a great dog, viz. Pearson's. But I

\* The sportive title generally bestowed by Cowper on his amiable friends the Throckmorts.



wrote him a letter on Friday, (I mean a letter to Pearson, not to his dog, which I mention to prevent mistakes—for the said last antecedent might occasion them in this place also) informing him, that unless he tied up his great mastiff in the day-time, I would send him a worse thing, commonly called and known by the name of an attorney. When I go forth to ramble in the fields, I do not sally, like Don Quixote, with a purpose of encountering monsters, if any such can be found; but am a peaceable, poor gentleman, and a poet, who means nobody any harm, the fox-hunters and the two universities of this land excepted.

I cannot learn from any creature whether the turnpike bill is alive or dead: so ignorant am I, and by such ignoramus surrounded. But if I know little else, this at least I know, that I love you and Mr. Frog; that I long for your return, and that I am, with Mrs. Unwin's best affections, ever yours,  
W. C.

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LETTER CXXXV.

To Lady HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COZ.

*The Lodge, May 28, 1790.*

I thank thee for the offer of thy best services on this occasion, but Heaven guard my brows from the wreath you mention, whatever wreath beside may hereafter adorn them! It would be a leaden extinguisher, clapped on all the fire of my genius, and I should never more produce a line worth reading. To speak seriously, it would make me miserable; and therefore I am sure that thou, of all my friends, wouldst least wish me to wear it.

Adieu, ever thine—in Homer—hurry.

W. C.

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LETTER CXXXVI.

To Lady HESKETH.

*June 3, 1790.*

You will wonder when I tell you, that I, even I, am considered by people, who live at a great distance, as having interest and influence sufficient to procure a place at court for those who may happen to want one. I have, accordingly, been applied to within these few days, by a Welchman, with a wife and many children, to get him made Poet-laureat as fast as possible. If thou wouldst wish to make the world merry twice a year, thou canst not do better than procure the office for him. I will promise thee, that he shall afford thee a hearty laugh in return every every birth-day, and every new-year. He is an honest man.

Adieu.

W. C.

## LETTER CXXXVII.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

*Weston, June 7, 1790.*

MY DEAR JOHN,

You know my engagements, and are, consequently, able to account for my silence: I will not, therefore, waste time and paper in mentioning them, but will only say, that, added to those with which you are acquainted, I have had other hinderances, such as business, and a disorder of my spirits, to which I have been all my life subject. At present I am, thank God, perfectly well, both in mind and body. Of you I am always mindful, whether I write or not, and very desirous to see you. You will remember, I hope, that you are under engagements to us, and as soon as your Norfolk friends can spare you, will fulfil them. Give us all the time you can, and all that they can spare to us.

You never pleased me more than when you told me you had abandoned your mathematical pursuits. It grieved me to think that you were wasting your time merely to gain a little Cambridge fame not worth your having. I cannot be contented that your renown should thrive no where but on the banks of the Cam. Conceive a nobler ambition, and never let your honour be circumscribed by the paltry dimensions of an university. It is well that you have already, as you observ'd, acquired sufficient information in that science to enable you to pass creditably such examinations as, I suppose, you must hereafter undergo. Keep what you have gotten, and be content. More is needless.

You could not apply to a worse than I am to advise you concerning your studies. I was never a regular student myself; but lost the most valuable years of my life in an attorney's office, and in the Temple. I will not, therefore, give myself airs, and affect to know what I know not. The affair is of great importance to you, and you should be directed in it by a wiser than I. To speak, however, in very general terms on the subject, it seems to me that your chief concern is with history, natural philosophy, logic, and divinity. As to metaphysics, I know little about them, but the very little that I do know has not taught me to admire them. Life is too short to afford time even for serious trifles: pursue what you know to be attainable, make truth your object, and your studies will make you a wise man. Let your divinity, if I may advise, be the divinity of the glorious reformation: I mean in contradistinction to Arminianism, and all the *isms* that were ever broached in this world of error and ignorance.

The divinity of the reformation is called Calvinism, but injuri-

ously; it has been that of the church of Christ in all ages; it is the divinity of St. Paul, and of St. Paul's master, who met him in his way to Damascus.

I have written in great haste, that I might finish, if possible, before breakfast. Adieu; let us see you soon; the sooner the better. Give my love to the silent lady, the Rose, and all my friends around you.

W. C.

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LETTER CXXXVIII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*The Lodge, June 8, 1790.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Among the many who love and esteem you, there is none who rejoices more in your felicity than myself: far from blaming, I commend you much for connecting yourself, young as you are, with a well-chosen companion for life. Entering on the state with uncontaminated morals, you have the best possible prospect of happiness, and will be secure against a thousand and ten thousand temptations to which, at an early period of life, in such a Babylon as you must necessarily inhabit, you would otherwise have been exposed. I see it too in the light you do, as likely to be advantageous to you in your profession. Men of business have a better opinion of a candidate for employment who is married, because he has given bond to the world, as you observe, and to himself, for diligence, industry, and attention. It is altogether, therefore, a subject of much congratulation, and mine (to which I add Mrs. Unwin's) is very sincere. Samson, at his marriage, proposed a riddle to the Philistines. I am no Samson, neither are you a Philistine, yet expound to me the following, if you can:

*What are they which stand at a distance from each other, and meet without ever moving?*

Should you be so fortunate as to guess it, you may propose it to the company when you celebrate your nuptials, and if you can win thirty changes of raiment by it, as Samson did by his, let me tell you they will be no contemptible acquisition to a young beginner.

You will not, I hope, forget your way to Weston in consequence of your marriage, where you and yours will be always welcome.

W. C.

LETTER CXXXIX.  
To Mrs. BODHAM.*Weston, June 29, 1790.*

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

It is true that I did sometimes complain to Mrs. Unwin of your long silence, but it is likewise true that I made many excuses for you in my own mind, and did not feel myself at all inclined to be angry, nor even much to wonder. There is an awkwardness and a difficulty in writing to those whom distance and length of time have made in a manner new to us, that naturally give us a check when we would otherwise be glad to address them. But a time, I hope, is near at hand, when you and I shall be effectually delivered from all such constraints, and correspond as fluently as if our intercourse had suffered much less interruption.

You must not suppose, my dear, that though I may be said to have lived many years with a pen in my hand, I am myself altogether at my ease on this tremendous occasion. Imagine, rather, and you will come nearer to the truth, that, when I placed this sheet before me, I asked myself more than once, "How shall I fill it?" One subject, indeed, presents itself, the pleasant prospect that opens upon me of our coming once more together; but that once exhausted, with what shall I proceed? Thus I questioned myself; but finding neither end nor profit of such questions, I bravely resolved to dismiss them all at once, and to engage in the great enterprize of a letter to my quondam Rose at a venture.—There is great truth in a rant of Nat. Lee's, or of Dryden's, I know not which, who makes an enamoured youth say to his mistress,

"And nonsense shall be eloquence in love."

For certain it is, that they who truly love one another are not very nice examiners of each other's style or matter; if an epistle comes, it is always welcome, though it be, perhaps, neither so wise nor so witty as one might have wished to make it.

And now, my cousin, let me tell thee how much I feel myself obliged to Mr. Bodham for the readiness he expresses to accept my invitation. Assure him that, stranger as he is to me at present, and natural as the dread of strangers has ever been to me, I shall yet receive him with open arms, because he is your husband, and loves you dearly. That consideration alone will endear him to me, and I dare say that I shall not find it his only recommendation to

my best affections. May the health of his relation (his mother I suppose) be soon restored, and long continued, and may nothing melancholy, of what kind soever, interfere to prevent our joyful meeting. Between the present moment and September, our house is clear for your reception, and you have nothing to do but to give us a day or two's notice of your coming. In September we expect Lady Hesketh, and I only regret that our house is not large enough to hold all together, for were it possible that you could meet, you would love each other.

Mrs. Unwin bids me offer you her best love. She is never well, but always patient, and always cheerful, and feels beforehand, that she shall be loth to part with you.

My love to all the dear Donnes of every name. Write soon, no matter about what. W. C.

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LETTER CXL.

To Lady HESKETH.

*July 7, 1790.*

Instead of beginning with the saffron-vested morning to which Homer invites me, on a morning that has no saffron vest to boast, I shall begin with you.

It is irksome to us both to wait so long as we must for you, but we are willing to hope that, by a longer stay, you will make us amends for all this tedious procrastination.

Mrs. Unwin has made known her whole case to Mr. Gregson, whose opinion of it has been very consolatory to me. He says, indeed, it is a case perfectly out of the reach of all physical aid, but at the same time not at all dangerous. Constant pain is a sad grievance, whatever part is affected, and she is hardly ever free from an aching head, as well as an uneasy side; but patience is an anodyne of God's own preparation, and of that he gives her largely.

The French, who, like all lively folks, are extreme in every thing, are such in their zeal for freedom, and if it were possible to make so noble a cause ridiculous, their manner of promoting it could not fail to do so. Princes and peers reduced to plain gentlemanship, and gentles reduced to a level with their own lacqueys, are excesses of which they will repent hereafter. Difference of rank and subordination are, I believe, of God's appointment, and, consequently, essential to the well-being of society: but what we mean by fanaticism in religion is exactly that which animates their politics, and unless time should sober them, they will, after all, be an unhappy people. Perhaps it deserves not much to be wondered at, that, at their first escape from tyrannic shackles, they should



act extravagantly, and treat their kings as they have sometimes treated their idols. To these, however, they are reconciled in due time again, but their respect for monarchy is at an end. They want nothing now but a little English sobriety, and that they want extremely. I heartily wish them some wit in their anger, for it were great pity that so many millions should be miserable for want of it.

W. C.

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LETTER CXLI.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

*Weston, July 8, 1790.*

MY DEAR JOHNNY,

You do well to perfect yourself on the violin. Only beware that an amusement so very bewitching as music, especially when we produce it ourselves, do not steal from you *all* those hours that should be given to study. I can be well content that it should serve you as a refreshment after severer exercises, but not that it should engross you wholly. Your own good sense will most probably dictate to you this precaution, and I might have spared you the trouble of it, but I have a degree of zeal for your proficiency in more important pursuits, that would not suffer me to suppress it.

Having delivered my conscience by giving you this sage admonition, I will convince you that I am a censor not over and above severe, by acknowledging, in the next place, that I have known very good performers on the violin, very learned also; and my cousin, Dr. Spencer Madan, is an instance.

I am delighted that you have engaged your sister to visit us; for I say to myself, if John be amiable, what must Catharine be? For we males, be we angelic as we may, are always surpassed by the ladies. But know this, that I shall not be in love with either of you, if you stay with us only a few days, for you talk of a week or so.—Correct this erratum, I beseech you, and convince us by a much longer continuance here that it was one.

W. C.

Mrs. Unwin has never been well since you saw her. You are not passionately fond of letter-writing, I perceive, who have dropped a lady; but you will be a loser by the bargain; for one letter of hers, in point of real utility and sterling value, is worth twenty of mine, and you will never have another from her till you have earned it.

## LETTER CXLII.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

*Weston, July 31, 1790.*

You have by this time, I presume, answered Lady Hesketh's letter: if not, answer it without delay; and this injunction I give you, judging that it may not be entirely unnecessary; for though I have seen you but once, and only for two or three days, I have found out that you are a scatter-brain. I made the discovery, perhaps, the sooner, because in this you very much resemble myself, who, in the course of my life, have, through mere carelessness and inattention, lost many advantages. An insuperable shyness has also deprived me of many. And here again there is a resemblance between us. You will do well to guard against both, for of both, I believe, you have a considerable share as well as myself.

We long to see you again, and are only concerned at the short stay you propose to make with us. If time should seem to you as short at Weston as it seems to us, your visit here will be gone "as a dream when one awaketh, or as a watch in the night."

It is a life of dreams, but the pleasantest one naturally wishes longest.

I shall find employment for you, having made already some part of the fair copy of the *Odyssey* a foul one. I am revising it for the last time, and spare nothing that I can mend. The *Iliad* is finished.

If you have *Donne's Poems*, bring them with you, for I have not seen them many years, and should like to look them over.

You may treat us, too, if you please, with a little of your music, for I seldom hear any, and delight much in it. You need not fear a rival, for we have but two fiddles in the neighbourhood, one a gardener's, the other a tailor's—terrible performers both!

W. C.

## LETTER CXLIII.

To Mrs. BODHAM.

*Weston, Sept. 9, 1790.*

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I am truly sorry to be forced, after all, to resign the hope of seeing you and Mr. Bodham at Weston this year; the next may possibly be more propitious, and I heartily wish it may. Poor Catharine's unseasonable indisposition has also cost us a disappointment which we much regret; and were it not

that Johnny has made shift to reach us, we should think ourselves completely unfortunate. But him we have, and him we will hold as long as we can, so expect not very soon to see him in Norfolk. He is so harmless, cheerful, gentle, and good-tempered, and I am so entirely at my ease with him, that I cannot surrender him without a *needs must*, even to those who have a superior claim upon him. He left us yesterday morning, and whither do you think he has gone, and on what errand? Gone, as sure as you are alive, to London, and to convey my Homer to the bookseller's. But he will return the day after to-morrow, and I mean to part with him no more till necessity shall force us asunder. Suspect me not, my cousin, of being such a monster as to have imposed this task myself on your kind nephew, or even to have thought of doing it. It happened that, one day, as we chatted by the fire-side, I expressed a wish that I could hear of some trusty body going to London, to whose care I might consign my voluminous labours, the work of five years: for I purpose never to visit that city again myself, and should have been uneasy to have left a charge of so much importance to me, altogether to the care of a stage-coachman. Johnny had no sooner heard my wish, than offering himself to the service, he fulfilled it; and his offer was made in such terms, and accompanied with a countenance and manner expressive of so much alacrity, that, unreasonable as I thought it at first to give him so much trouble, I soon found that I should mortify him by a refusal. He is gone, therefore, with a box full of poetry, of which I think nobody will plunder him. He has only to say what it is, and there is no commodity, I think, a free-booter would covet less.

W. C.

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LETTER CXLIV.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*The Lodge, Sept. 13, 1790.*

Your letter was particularly welcome to me, not only because it came after a long silence, but because it brought me good news—news of your marriage, and, consequently, I trust, of your happiness. May that happiness be durable as your lives, and may you be the *felices ter et amplius* of whom Horace sings so sweetly! This is my sincere wish, and, though expressed in prose, shall serve as your epithalamium. You comfort me when you say that your marriage will not deprive us of the sight of you hereafter. If you do not wish that I should regret your union, you must make that assurance good as often as you have opportunity.

After perpetual versification during five years, I find myself at last a vacant man, and reduced to read for my amusement. My Homer is gone to the press, and you will imagine that I feel a void in consequence. The proofs, however, will be coming soon, and I shall avail myself, with all my force, of this last opportunity to make my work as perfect as I wish it. I shall not, therefore, be long time destitute of employment, but shall have sufficient to keep me occupied all the winter, and part of the ensuing spring, for Johnson purposes to publish either in March, April, or May. My very preface is finished. It did not cost me much trouble, being neither long nor learned. I have spoken my mind as freely as decency would permit on the subject of Pope's version, allowing him, at the same time, all the merit to which I think him entitled. I have given my reasons for translating in blank verse, and hold some discourse on the mechanism of it, chiefly with a view to obviate the prejudices of some people against it. I expatiate a little on the manner in which I think Homer ought to be rendered, and in which I have endeavoured to render him myself, and anticipated two or three cavils to which I foresee that I shall be liable from the ignorant or uncandid, in order, if possible, to prevent them. These are the chief heads of my preface, and the whole consists of about twelve pages.

It is possible, when I come to treat with Johnson about the copy, I may want some person to negociate for me, and knowing no one so intelligent as yourself in books, or so well qualified to estimate their just value, I shall beg leave to resort to and rely on you as my negociator. But I will not trouble you unless I should see occasion. My cousin was the bearer of my MSS. to London. He went on purpose, and returns to-morrow. Mrs. Unwin's affectionate felicitations, added to my own, conclude me, dear friend,  
sincerely yours,  
W. C.

The trees of a colonade will solve my riddle.

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LETTER CXLV.

To Mrs. BODHAM.

*Weston, Nov. 21, 1790.*

MY DEAR COZ.

Our kindness to your nephew is no more than he must entitle himself to wherever he goes. His amiable disposition and manners will never fail to secure him a warm place in the affections of all who know him. The advice I gave respecting his poem on Audley End was dictated by my love of him, and a sincere desire of his success. It is one thing to write what may please our friends, who, because they are such,

are apt to be a little biassed in our favour; and another to write what may please every body: because they who have no connection, or even knowledge of the author, will be sure to find fault if they can. My advice, however salutary and necessary, as it seemed to me, was such as I dare not have given to a poet of less diffidence than he. Poets are to a proverb irritable, and he is the only one I ever knew who seems to have no spark of that fire about him. He has left us about a fortnight, and sorry we were to lose him; but had he been my son he must have gone, and I could not have regretted him more. If his sister be still with you, present my love to her, and tell her how much I wish to see them at Weston together.

Mrs. Hewitt probably remembers more of my childhood than I can recollect either of hers or my own; but this I recollect, that the days of that period were happy days, compared with most I have seen since. There are few, perhaps, in the world, who have not cause to look back with regret on the days of infancy; yet, to say the truth, I suspect some deception in this: for infancy itself has its cares, and though we cannot now conceive how trifles could affect us much, it is certain that they did. Trifles they appear now, but such they were not then.

W. C.

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LETTER CXLVI.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

*My Birth-Day.*

*Friday, Nov. 26, 1790.*

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

I am happy that you have escaped from the claws of Euclid into the bosom of Justinian. It is useful, I suppose, to *every* man to be well grounded in the principles of jurisprudence, and I take it to be a branch of science that bids much fairer to enlarge the mind, and give an accuracy of reasoning, than all the mathematics in the world. Mind your studies, and you will soon be wiser than I can hope to be.

We had a visit on Monday from one of the first women in the world—in point of character I mean, and accomplishments—the Dowager Lady Spencer! I may receive, perhaps, some honours hereafter, should my translation speed according to my wishes, and the pains I have taken with it; but shall never receive any that I shall esteem so highly. She is, indeed, worthy to whom I should dedicate, and may but my *Odyssey* prove as worthy of her, I shall have nothing to fear from the critics.

Yours, my dear Johnny, with much affection, W. C.



## LETTER CXLVII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

*Weston, Nov. 30, 1790.*

I will confess that I thought your letter somewhat tardy, though, at the same time, I made every excuse for you, except, as it seems, the right. *That*, indeed, was out of the reach of all possible conjecture. I could not guess that your silence was occasioned by your being occupied with either thieves or thief-takers. Since, however, the cause was such, I rejoice that your labours were not in vain, and that the free-booters who had plundered your friend are safe in limbo. I admire, too, as much as I rejoice in your success, the indefatigable spirit that prompted you to pursue, with such unremitting perseverance, an object not to be reached but at the expense of infinite trouble, and that must have led you into an acquaintance with scenes and characters the most horrible to a mind like yours. I see in this conduct the zeal and firmness of your friendship, to whomsoever professed; and though I wanted not a proof of it myself, contemplate so unequivocal an indication of what you really are, and of what I always believed you to be, with much pleasure. May you rise from the condition of an humble prosecutor, or witness, to the bench of judgment.

When your letter arrived, it found me with the worst and most obstinate cold that I ever caught. This was one reason why it had not a speedier answer. Another is, that, except Tuesday morning, there is none in the week in which I am not engaged in the last revision of my translation; the revision, I mean, of my proof-sheets. To this business I give myself with an assiduity and attention truly admirable; and set an example which, if other poets could be apprized of, they would do well to follow. Miscarriages in authorship, I am persuaded, are as often to be ascribed to want of pains-taking as to want of ability.

Lady Hesketh, Mrs. Unwin and myself often mention you, and always in terms that, though you would blush to hear them, you need not be ashamed of: at the same time wishing much that you could change our trio into a quartetto.

W. C.

## LETTER CXLVIII.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

*Weston, Dec. 18, 1790.*

I perceive myself so flattered by the instances of illustrious success mentioned in your letter, that I feel all the amiable modesty, for which I was once so famous, sensibly giving way to a spirit of vain-glory.

The King's College subscription makes me proud. The effect that my verses have had on your two young friends, the mathematicians, makes me proud, and I am, if possible, prouder still of the contents of the letter that you enclosed.

You complained of being stupid, and sent me one of the cleverest letters. I have not complained of being stupid, and have sent you one of the dullest. But it is no matter; I never aim at any thing above the pitch of every day's scribble, when I write to those I love.

Homer proceeds, my boy—We shall get through it in time, and I hope by the time appointed. We are now in the tenth Iliad. I expect the ladies every minute to breakfast. You have their best love. Mine attends the whole army of Donnes at Mattishall Green assembled. How happy should I find myself were I but one of the party! My capering days are over, but do you caper for me, that you may give them some idea of the happiness I should feel were I in the midst of them.

W. C.

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LETTER CXLIX.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

*Weston, Jan. 21, 1791.*

I know that you have already been catechized by Lady Hesketh on the subject of your return hither before the winter shall be over, and shall therefore only say, that if you *can* come, we shall be happy to receive you. Remember also, that nothing can excuse the non-performance of a promise but absolute necessity. In the mean time, my faith in your veracity is such, that I am persuaded you will suffer nothing less than necessity to prevent it. Were you not extremely pleasant to us, and just the sort of youth that suits us, we should neither of us have said half so much, or perhaps a word on the subject.

Yours, my dear Johnny, are vagaries that I shall never see practised by any other, and whether you slap your ankle, or reel as if you were fuddled, or dance in the path before me, all is characteristic of yourself, and therefore to me delightful. I have hinted to you, indeed, sometimes, that you should be cautious of indulging antic habits and singularities of all sorts, and young men in general have need enough of such admonition; but yours are a sort of fairy habits, such as might belong to Puck or Robin Goodfellow; and, therefore, good as the advice is, I should be half sorry should you take it.

This allowance, at least, I give you. Continue to take your walks, if walks they may be called, exactly in their present fashion, till you have taken orders. Then, indeed, for as much as

a skipping, curvetting, bounding divine might be a spectacle not altogether seemly, I shall consent to your adoption of a more grave demeanour.

W. C.

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LETTER CL.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

*The Lodge, Feb. 5, 1791.*

My letters to you are all either petitionary, or in the style of acknowledgments and thanks, and such nearly in an alternate order. In my last I loaded you with commissions, for the due discharge of which I am now to say, and say truly, how much I feel myself obliged to you. Neither can I stop there, but must thank you likewise for new honours from Scotland, which have left me nothing to wish for from that country, for my list is now, I believe, graced with the subscription of all its learned bodies. I regret only that some of them arrived too late to do honour to my present publication of names; but there are those among them, and from Scotland too, that may give an useful hint, perhaps, to our own universities. Your very handsome present of Pope's Homer has arrived safe, notwithstanding an accident that befell him by the way. The hall-servant brought the parcel from Olney, resting it on the pommel of the saddle, and his horse fell with him: Pope was, in consequence, rolled in the dirt, but being well coated got no damage. If augurs and soothsayers were not out of fashion, I should have consulted one or two of that order, in hope of learning from them that this fall was ominous. I have found a place for him in the parlour, where he makes a splendid appearance, and where he shall not long want a neighbour; one who, if less popular than himself, shall at least look as big as he. How has it happened, that since Pope did certainly dedicate both Iliad and Odyssey, no dedication is found in this first edition of them?

W. C.

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LETTER CLI.

To Lady HESKETH.

*Feb. 13, 1791.*

I can now send you a full and true account of this business: having learned that your inn at Woburn was the George, we sent Samuel thither yesterday. Mr. Martin, master of the George, told him \* \* \* \* \*

W. C.

† *Note by the Editor.*—This letter contained the history of a servant's cruelty to a post-horse, which a reader of humanity could not wish to see in print. But the postscript describes so pleasantly the signal influence of a poet's reputation on the spirit of a liberal inn-keeper, that it surely ought not to be suppressed.

*P. S.* I cannot help adding a circumstance that will divert you. Martin having learned from Sam whose servant he was, told him that he had never seen Mr. Cowper, but he had heard him frequently spoken of by the companies that had called at his house; and therefore, when Sam would have paid for his breakfast, would take nothing from him. Who says that fame is only empty breath? On the contrary, it is good ale and cold beef into the bargain

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LETTER CLII.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

*Feb. 27, 1791.*

Now, my dearest Johnny, I must tell thee, in few words, how much I love and am obliged to thee for thy affectionate services.

My Cambridge honours are all to be ascribed to you, and to you only. Yet you are but a little man, and a little man into the bargain, who have kicked the mathematics, their idol, out of your study. So important are the endings which Providence frequently connects with small beginnings. Had you been here, I could have furnished you with much employment, for I have so dealt with your fair MSS. in the course of my polishing and improving, that I have almost blotted out the whole: such, however, as it is, I must now send it to the printer, and he must be content with it, for there is not time to make a fresh copy. We are now printing the second book of the *Odyssey*.

Should the Oxonians bestow none of their notice on me on this occasion, it will happen singularly enough, that as Pope received all his university honours, in the subscription way, from Oxford, and none at all from Cambridge, so I shall have received all mine from Cambridge, and none from Oxford. This is the more likely to be the case, because I understand, that on whatsoever occasion either of those learned bodies thinks fit to move, the other always makes it a point to sit still—thus proving its superiority.

I shall send up your letter to Lady Hesketh in a day or two, knowing that the intelligence contained in it will afford her the greatest pleasure. Know, likewise, for your own gratification, that all the Scotch universities have subscribed, none excepted.

We are all as well as usual; that is to say, as well as reasonable folks expect to be on the crazy side of this frail existence.

I rejoice that we shall so soon have you again at our fire-side.

W. C.

## LIFE OF COWPER.

## LETTER CLIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

*Weston, March 6, 1791.*

After all this ploughing and sowing on the plains of Troy, once fruitful, such at least to my translating predecessor, some harvest, I hope, will arise for me also. My long work has received its last, last touches; and I am now giving my preface its final adjustment. We are in the fourth Odyssey in the course of our printing, and I expect that I and the swallows shall appear together: they have slept all the winter, but I, on the contrary, have been extremely busy; yet if I can "*Virum volitare per ora*" as swiftly as they through the air, I shall account myself well requited.

W. C.

## LETTER CLIV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

*March 10, 1791.*

Give my affectionate remembrances to your sisters, and tell them I am impatient to entertain them with my old story new dressed.

I have two French prints hanging in my study, both on Iliad subjects; and I have an English one in the parlour, on a subject from the same poem. In one of the former, Agamemnon addresses Achilles exactly in the attitude of a dancing-master turning Miss in a minuet: in the latter, the figures are plain, and the attitudes plain also. This is, in some considerable measure, I believe, the difference between my translation and Pope's; and will serve as an exemplification of what I am going to lay before you, and the public.

W. C.

## LETTER CLV.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

*Weston, March 19, 1791.*

You ask if it may not be improper to solicit Lady Hesketh's subscription to the poems of the Norwich maiden? To which I reply, it will be by no means improper: on the contrary, I am persuaded that she will give her name with a very good will, for she is much an admirer of poesy that is worthy to be admired; and such I think, judging by the specimen, the poesy of this maiden, Elizabeth Bentley, of Norwich, is likely to prove.

Not that I am myself inclined to expect, in general, great matters in the poetical way from persons whose ill fortune it has been to want the common advantages of education; neither do I account



it, in general, a kindness to such to encourage them in the indulgence of a propensity more likely to do them harm, in the end, than to advance their interest. Many such phenomena have arisen within my remembrance, at which all the world has wondered for a season, and has then forgot them.

The fact is, that though strong natural genius is always accompanied with strong natural tendency to its object, yet it often happens that the tendency is found where the genius is wanting. In the present instance, however, (the poems of a certain Mrs. Leapor excepted, who published some forty years ago) I discern, I think, more marks of a true poetical talent than I remember to have observed in the verses of any other male or female so disadvantageously circumstanced. I wish her, therefore, good speed, and subscribe to her with all my heart.

You will rejoice when I tell you that I have some hopes, after all, of a harvest from Oxford also: Mr. Throckmorton has written to a person of considerable influence there, which he has desired him to exert in my favour, and *his* request, I should imagine, will hardly prove a vain one. Adieu.

W. C.

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LETTER CLVI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

*Weston, March 24, 1791.*

You apologize for your silence in a manner which affords me so much pleasure that I cannot but be satisfied. Let business be the cause, and I am contented. That is a cause to which I would even be accessory myself, and would increase yours by any means, except by a law-suit of my own, at the expense of all your opportunities of writing oftener than thrice in a twelvemonth.

Your application to Dr. Dunbar reminds me of two lines to be found some where in Dr. Young—

“And now a poet’s gratitude you see,

“Grant him two favours, and he’ll ask for three.”

In this particular, therefore, I perceive that a poet and a poet’s friend bear a striking resemblance to each other. The Doctor will bless himself that the number of Scotch universities is not larger, assured that, if they equalled those in England in number of colleges, you would give him no rest till he had engaged them all. It is true, as Lady Hesketh told you, that I shall not fear, in the matter of subscriptions, a comparison even with Pope himself. Considering, I mean, that we live in days of terrible taxation, and when verse, not being a necessary of life, is accounted dear, be it

what it may, even at the lowest price. I am no very good arithmetician, yet I calculated the other day in my morning walk, that my two volumes, at the price of three guineas, will cost the purchaser less than the seventh part of a farthing per line. Yet there are lines among them that have cost me the labour of hours, and none that have not cost me some labour. W. C.

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LETTER CLVII.

To Mrs. THROCKMORTON.

*April 1, 1791.*

My dear Mrs. Frog, a word or two before breakfast, which is all that I shall have time to send you.

You have not, I hope, forgot to tell Mr. Frog how much I am obliged to him for his kind, though unsuccessful attempt in my favour at Oxford. It seems not a little extraordinary, that persons so nobly patronized themselves, on the score of literature, should resolve to give no encouragement to it in return. Should I find a fair opportunity to thank them hereafter, I will not neglect it.

Could Homer come himself, distress'd and poor,  
And tune his harp at Rhedicina's door,  
The rich old vixen would exclaim, I fear,  
"Begone! no trampler gets a farthing here."

I have read your husband's pamphlet through and through. You may think, perhaps, and so may he, that a question so remote from all concern of mine could not interest me; but if you think so, you are both mistaken. He can write nothing that will not interest me; in the first place for the writer's sake, and in the next place, because he writes better and reasons better than any body; with more candour, and with more sufficiency; and, consequently, with more satisfaction to all his readers, save only his opponents. They, I think, by this time, wish that they had let him alone.

Tom is delighted past measure with his wooden nag, and gallops at a rate that would kill any horse that had a life to lose.

W. C.

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LETTER CLVIII.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

MY DEAR JOHNNY,

*Weston, April 6, 1791.*

A thousand thanks for your splendid assemblage of Cambridge luminaries. If you are not contented with your collection, it can only be because you are unreasonable; for I, who may be supposed more covetous on this occasion than anybody, am highly satisfied, and even delighted with it. If, in-

deed, you should find it practicable to add still to the number, I have not the least objection; but this charge I give you,

Ἄλλο δὲ τοι εἶρω, σὺ δ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶ βαλλεὸ σῆσι.

Stay not an hour beyond the time you have mentioned, even though you should be able to add a thousand names by doing so; for I cannot afford to purchase them at that cost. I long to see you, and so do we both, and will not suffer you to postpone your visit for any such consideration. No, my dear boy, in the affair of subscriptions we are already illustrious enough; shall be so at least when you shall have enlisted a college or two more, which, perhaps, you may be able to do in the course of the ensuing week. I feel myself much obliged to your university, and much disposed to admire the liberality of spirit they have shown on this occasion. Certainly I had not deserved much favour of their hands, all things considered; but the cause of literature seems to have some weight with them, and to have superseded the resentment they might be supposed to entertain on the score of certain censures that you wot of. It is not so at Oxford. W. C.

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LETTER CLIX.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*April 29, 1791.*

I forget if I told you that Mr. Throckmorton had applied, through the medium of —, to the university of Oxford. He did so, but without success. Their answer was, “that they subscribe to nothing.”

Pope’s subscriptions did not amount, I think, to six hundred; and mine will not fall very far short of five. Noble doings, at a time of day when Homer has no news to tell us, and when all other comforts of life having risen in price, poetry has of course fallen. I call it a “comfort of life:” it is so to others, but to myself it is become even a necessary.

These holiday times are very unfavourable to the printer’s progress. He and all his demons are making themselves merry, and me sad, for I mourn at every hinderance. W. C.

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LETTER CLX.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

*Weston, May 23, 1791.*

Did I not know that you are never more in your element than when you are exerting yourself in my cause, I should congratulate you on the hope there seems to be that your labour will soon have an end.

You will wonder, perhaps, my Johnny, that Mrs. Unwin, by my desire, enjoined you to secrecy concerning the translation of the Frogs and Mice. Wonderful it may well seem to you, that I should wish to hide, for a short time, from a few, what I am just going to publish to all. But I had more reasons than one for this mysterious management; that is to say, I had two. In the first place, I wished to surprise my readers agreeably; and, secondly, I wished to allow none of my friends an opportunity to object to the measure, who might think it, perhaps, a measure more bountiful than prudent. But I have had my sufficient reward, though not a pecuniary one. It is a poem of much humour, and accordingly I found the translation of it very amusing. It struck me too, that I must either make it part of the present publication, or never publish it at all; it would have been so terribly out of its place in any other volume.

I long for the time that shall bring you once more to Weston, and all your *et cetera's* with you. Oh! what a month of May has this been! Let never poet, English poet at least, give himself to the praises of May again.

W. C.

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#### THE JUDGMENT OF THE POETS.

Two Nymphs, both nearly of an age,  
 Of numerous charms possess'd,  
 A warm dispute once chanc'd to wage,  
 Whose temper was the best.

The worth of each had been complete,  
 Had both alike been mild;  
 But one, although her smile was sweet,  
 Frown'd oft'ner than she smil'd.

And in her humour, when she frown'd,  
 Would raise her voice and roar,  
 And shake with fury, to the ground,  
 The garland that she wore.

The other was of gentler cast,  
 From all such frenzy clear;  
 Her frowns were seldom known to last,  
 And never prov'd severe.

To poets of renown in song,  
 The Nymphs referr'd the cause,  
 Who, strange to tell, all judg'd it wrong,  
 And gave misplac'd applause.

They gentle call'd, and kind, and soft,  
 The flippant and the scold;  
 And though she chang'd her mood so oft,  
 That failing left untold.

No judges, sure, were e'er so mad,  
 Or so resolv'd to err;  
 In short, the charms her sister had  
 They lavish'd all on her.

Then thus the God, whom fondly they  
 Their great inspirer call,  
 Was heard, one genial summer's day,  
 To reprimand them all.

“ Since thus ye have combin'd,” he said,  
 “ My fav'rite Nymph to slight,  
 “ Adorning May, that peevish maid,  
 “ With June's undoubted right;  
 “ The Minx shall, for your folly's sake,  
 “ Still prove herself a shrew;  
 “ Shall make your scribbling fingers ache,  
 “ And pinch your noses blue.”

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LETTER CLXI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

*The Lodge, June 15, 1791.*

If it will afford you any comfort that you have a share in my affections, of that comfort you may avail yourself at all times. You have acquired it by means which, unless I should become worthless myself, to an uncommon degree, will always secure you from the loss of it. You are learning what all learn, though few at so early an age, that man is an ungrateful animal; and that benefits too often, instead of securing a due return, operate rather as provocations to ill-treatment. This I take to be the *summum malum* of the human heart. Towards God we are all guilty of it, more or less; but between man and man, we may thank God for it, there are some exceptions. He leaves this peccant principle to operate, in some degree against himself, in all, for our humiliation I suppose; and because the pernicious effects of it cannot, in reality, injure him; he cannot suffer by them; but he knows, that unless he should restrain its influence on the dealings of mankind with each other, the bonds of society would be dissolved, and all charitable intercourse at an end amongst us.



It was said of Archbishop Cranmer, "Do him an ill turn, and you make him your *friend* for ever:" of others it may be said, "Do them a good one, and they will be for ever your *enemies*." It is the grace of God only that makes the difference.

The absence of Homer (for we have now shaken hands and parted) is well supplied by three relations of mine from Norfolk—my cousin Johnson, an aunt of his, and his sister. I love them all dearly, and am well contented to resign to them the place in my attentions so lately occupied by the chiefs of Greece and Troy. His aunt and I have spent many a merry day together, when we were some forty years younger; and we make shift to be merry together still. His sister is a sweet young woman, graceful, good-natured, and gentle, just what I had imagined her to be before I had seen her.

Farewell!

W. C.

The occurrences related in the series of letters that I have just imparted to my reader, have now brought me to the close of the second period in my work. As I contemplated the life of my friend, it seemed to display itself in three obvious divisions; the first ending with the remarkable æra when he burst forth on the world, as a poet, in his fiftieth year; on which occasion we may apply to him the lively compliment of Waller to Denham, and say, with superior truth, "He burst out like the Irish rebellion, three score thousand strong, when nobody was aware, or in the least suspected it." The second division may conclude with the publication of his Homer; comprizing the incidents of ten splendid and fruitful years, that may be regarded as the meridian of his poetical career. The subsequent period extends to that awful event which terminates every labour of the poet and the man.

We have seen, in many of the preceding letters, with what ardour of application and liveliness of hope he devoted himself to his favourite project of enriching the literature of his country with an English Homer, that might be justly esteemed as a faithful, yet free translation; a genuine and graceful representative of the justly idolized original.

After five years of intense and affectionate labour, in which nothing could withhold him from his interesting work, except that oppressive and cruel malady which suspended his powers of application for several months, he published his complete version in two quarto volumes, on the first of July, 1791; having inscribed the Iliad to his young noble kinsman, Earl Cowper, and the Odyssey to the Dowager Countess Spencer, a lady for whose virtues he had long entertained a most cordial and affectionate veneration.

The accomplished translator had exerted no common powers of genius and of industry to satisfy both himself and the world; yet, in his first edition of this long-laboured work, he afforded complete satisfaction to neither, and I believe for this reason: Homer is so exquisitely beautiful in his own language, and he has been so long an idol in every literary mind, that any copy of him, which the best of modern poets can execute, must probably resemble, in its effect, the portrait of a graceful woman, painted by an excellent artist for her lover: the lover, indeed, will acknowledge great merit in the work, and think himself much indebted to the skill of such an artist; but he will never acknowledge, as in truth he never can feel, that the best of resemblances exhibits all the grace that he discerns in the beloved original.

So fares it with the admirers of Homer; his very translators themselves feel so perfectly the power of this predominant affection, that they gradually grow discontented with their own labour, however approved in the moment of its supposed completion. This was so remarkably the case with Cowper, that, in process of time, we shall see him employed upon what may almost be called his second translation; so great were the alterations he made in a deliberate revisal of his work for a second edition. And in the preface which he prepared for that edition, he has spoken of his own labour with the most frank and ingenuous veracity. Yet of the first edition it may, I think, be fairly said, that it accomplished more than any of his poetical predecessors had achieved before him. It made the nearest approach to that sweet majestic simplicity which forms one of the most attractive features in the great prince and father of poets.

Cowper, in reading Pope's Homer to Lady Austen and Mrs. Unwin, had frequently expressed a wish, and an expectation of seeing the simplicity of the ancient Bard more faithfully preserved in a new English version. Lady Austen, with a kind severity, reproved him for expecting from others what he, of all men living, was best qualified to accomplish himself; and her solicitations on the subject excited him to the arduous undertaking; though it seems not to have been actually begun till after her departure from Olney.

If he was not at first completely successful in this long and mighty work, the continual and voluntary application with which he pursued it, was to himself a blessing of the utmost importance.

In those admirable admonitions to men of a poetical temperament, with which Dr. Currie has closed his instructive and pleasing "Life of Burns," that accomplished physician has justly pointed to a regular and constant occupation, as the true remedy

for an inordinate sensibility, which may prove so perilous an enemy to the peace and happiness of a poet. His remark appears to be particularly verified in the striking, and, I may say, medicinal influence, which a daily attachment of his thoughts to Homer produced, for a long time, on the tender spirits of my friend; an influence sufficiently proved by his frequent declarations, that he should be sorry to find himself at the end of his labour. The work was certainly beneficial to his health; it contributed a little to his fortune; and ultimately, I am persuaded, it will redound to his fame in a much higher degree than it has hitherto done. Time will probably prove, that if it is not a perfect representation of Homer, it is at least such a copy of the matchless original, as no modern writer can surpass in the two essential articles of fidelity and freedom.

I must not omit to observe one more advantage which Cowper derived from this extensive labour, for it is an advantage which reflects great honour on his sensibility as a man: I mean a constant flow of affectionate pleasure that he felt in the many kind offices which he received, from several friends, in the course of this laborious occupation.

I cannot more clearly illustrate his feelings on this subject, than by introducing a passage from one of his letters to his most assiduous and affectionate amanuensis, his young kinsman of Norfolk. It breathes all the tender moral spirit of Cowper, and shall, therefore, close the second division of my work.

*Weston, June 1, 1791.*

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

Now you may rest—now I can give you joy of the period of which I gave you hope in my last; the period of all your labours in my service. But this I can foretel you also, that if you persevere in serving your friends at this rate, your life is likely to be a life of labour: Yet persevere; your rest will be the sweeter hereafter. In the mean time I wish you, if at any time you should find occasion for him, just such a friend as you have proved to me.

W. C.

THE  
L I F E  
AND  
POSTHUMOUS WRITINGS  
OF  
*WILLIAM COWPER, Esq.*

1850

1850

1850

1850

1850

1850

1850

1850

1850



THE  
L I F E  
AND  
POSTHUMOUS WRITINGS  
OF  
WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.  
WITH AN  
INTRODUCTORY LETTER  
TO THE  
*RIGHT HONOURABLE EARL COWPER.*  
BY WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

“ Obversatur oculis ille vir, quo neminem aetas nostra graviorem, sanctiorem, subtiliorem denique tulit: quem ego quum ex admiratione diligere cœpissem, quod evenire contra solet, magis admiratus sum, postquam penitus inspexi. Inspexi enim penitus: nihil a me ille secretum, non jocularè, non serium, non triste, non latum.”

PLINII EPIST. Lib. iv. Ep. 17.

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1803.



CONTENTS  
OF THE  
SECOND VOLUME.

---

**T**HE *Life, Part the Third*—Cowper is solicited to engage in a splendid Edition of Milton—acquiesces in the Proposal—Origin of his Intimacy with his present Biographer—his Friendship for the late Professor of Poetry, the Rev. James Hurdis, 1 to 4.

<i>Letter</i>	1	To the Rev. Mr. Hurdis	March 6, 1791	4
	2	To the same	June 13, 1791	5
	3	To the same	Aug. 9, 1791	6
	4	To John Johnson, Esq.	Aug. 9, 1791	8
	5	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	Sept. 14, 1791	ib.
	6	To John Johnson, Esq.	Oct. 31, 1791	9
	7	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	Nov. 14, 1791	10
	8	To the Rev. Mr. Hurdis	Dec. 10, 1791	ib.
	9	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	Dec. 21, 1791	11
	10	To the Rev. Mr. Hurdis	Feb. 21, 1792	12
	11	To the same	March 2, 1792	13
	12	To John Johnson, Esq.	March 11, 1792	ib.

Verses to the Nightingale, page 14.

	13	To the Rev. Mr. Hurdis	March 23, 1792	15
	14	To Lady Hesketh	March 25, 1792	16
	15	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	March 30, 1792	17
	16	To the same	April 5, 1792	ib.
	17	To William Hayley, Esq.	April 6, 1792	18
	18	To the Rev. Mr. Hurdis	April 8, 1792	19
	19	To Lady Throckmorton	April 16, 1792	20
		Sonnet to William Wilberforce, Esq. page 21.		
	20	To Lady Hesketh	May 5, 1792	22
	21	To John Johnson, Esq.	May 20, 1792	23

The Author's Visit to Weston, 24. Sonnet to Mrs. Unwin, by Cowper, 24.  
Her severe Illness and gradual Recovery, 25, 26.

<i>Letter</i>	22	To Lady Hesketh	May 24, 1792	26
	23	To the same	May 26, 1792	27

Verses to the late Dr. Austen, of Cecil-street, page 28.

<i>Letter</i>	24	To Mrs. Bodham	June 4, 1792	28
	25	To William Hayley, Esq.	June 3, 1792	29
	26	To the same	June 5, 1792	ib.
	27	To the same	June 7, 1792	30
	28	To the same	June 10, 1792	31

		Verses to Dr. Darwin, Author of the Botanic Garden, page 32.		
<i>Letter</i>	29	To William Hayley, Esq.	June 19, 1792	<i>Page</i> 33
	30	To the same, enclosing Catharina, 2d Part, a Poem	June 27, 1792	ib.
	31	To the same	July 4, 1792	35
	32	To the same	July 15, 1792	36
	33	To the same	July 22, 1792	37
	34	To the same	July 29, 1792	38
Cowper's Visit to Eartham, page 39.				
<i>Letter</i>	35	To the Rev. Mr. Greatheed	Aug. 6, 1792	40
	36	To Mrs. Courteney	Aug. 12, 1792	41
	37	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	Aug. 14, 1792	42
	38	To the same	Aug. 18, 1792	43
	39	To Mrs. Courteney	Aug. 25, 1792	ib.
	40	To the Rev. Mr. Hurdis	Aug. 26, 1792	44
	41	To Lady Hesketh	Aug. 26, 1792	45
	42	To the same	Sept. 9, 1792	47
Cowper's Departure from Eartham, page 48.				
<i>Letter</i>	43	To William Hayley, Esq.	Sept. 18, 1792	48
	44	To the same	Sept. 21, 1792	49
	45	To the same	Oct. 2, 1792	50
	46	To the same	Oct. 13, 1792	51
	47	To John Johnson, Esq.	Oct. 19, 1792	52
	48	To the same	Oct. 22, 1792	ib.
	49	To William Hayley, Esq. enclosing a Sonnet to Romney	Oct. 28, 1792	53
	50	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	Nov. 9, 1792	54
	51	To John Johnson, Esq.	Nov. 20, 1792	55
	52	To William Hayley, Esq.	Nov. 22, 1792	56
	53	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	Dec. 16, 1792	ib.
	54	To William Hayley, Esq.	Dec. 26, 1792	58
	55	To the same	Jan. 20, 1793	ib.
	56	To the same	Jan. 29, 1793	59
	57	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	Feb. 5, 1793	60
	58	To Lady Hesketh	Feb. 10, 1793	ib.
	59	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	Feb. 17, 1793	61
	60	To the Rev. Mr. Hurdis	Feb. 23, 1793	62
	61	To William Hayley, Esq.	Feb. 24, 1793	63
	62	To Mr. Thomas Hayley	March 14, 1793	64
	63	To William Hayley, Esq.	March 19, 1793	66
	64	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	March 27, 1793	67
	65	To John Johnson, Esq.	April 11, 1793	68
	66	To William Hayley, Esq.	April 23, 1793	ib.
	67	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	May 5, 1793	69
	68	To Lady Hesketh	May 7, 1793	70
	69	To William Hayley, Esq.	May 21, 1793	71
	70	To Lady Hesketh	June 1, 1793	72

CONTENTS.

vii

<i>Letter</i> 71	To the Rev. Mr. Hurdis	June 6, 1793	<i>Page</i> 73
72	To William Hayley, Esq.	June 20, 1793	ib.
73	To the same	July 7, 1793	75
74	To the Rev. Mr. Greatheed	July 23, 1793	76
75	To William Hayley, Esq.	July 24, 1793	77
76	To Lady Hesketh	Aug. 11, 1793	78
77	To William Hayley, Esq.	Aug. 15, 1793	79
78	To Mrs. Courteney,	Aug. 20, 1793	80
79	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	Aug. 22, 1793	81
80	To William Hayley, Esq.	Aug. 27, 1793	ib.
81	To Lady Hesketh	Aug. 29, 1793	83
82	To the Rev. Mr. Johnson	Sept. 6, 1793	ib.
83	To William Hayley, Esq.	Sept. 8, 1793	85
84	To Mrs. Courteney	Sept. 16, 1793	ib.
85	To the Rev. Mr. Johnson	Sept. 29, 1793	86
86	To William Hayley, Esq.	Oct. 5, 1793	87
87	To the same	Oct. 18, 1793	88

The Author's second Visit to Weston—other Guests of Cowper, his Kinsman Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Rose; the latter commissioned by Lord Spencer to invite Cowper and all his Guests to Althorpe—the State of Mrs. Unwin's Health induces him to decline the Invitation, page 89.

<i>Letter</i> 88	To Mrs. Courteney	Nov. 4, 1793	89
89	To Joseph Hill, Esq.	Nov. 5, 1793	91
90	To the Rev. Mr. Hurdis	Nov. 24, 1793	92
91	To Samuel Rose, Esq.	Nov. 29, 1793	93
92	To the same	Dec. 8, 1793	94
93	To William Hayley, Esq.	Dec. 8, 1793	95

Origin of Cowper's projected Poem on the four Ages of Man—his Billet to the Rev. Mr. Buchanan, page 95, 96. Commencement of the Poem, 97. The Health of Cowper declines—the Incident that gave rise to the two last of his cheerful Letters, 98 to 100.

<i>Letter</i> 94	To William Hayley, Esq.	Dec. 17, 1793	100
95	To the same	Jan. 5, 1794	101

The Author induced to visit Weston, in the severe Illness of Cowper, by a friendly Exhortation from Mr. Greatheed, page 103. The Sufferings of the Invalid—the ineffectual Sympathy of his Friends—the Grant of a Pension from his Majesty to Cowper, 105 to 107. After remaining at Weston, under the tender Care of Lady Hesketh, till July, 1795, Cowper and Mrs. Unwin remove from Weston to Norfolk, under the Conduct of his Kinsman, Mr. Johnson—Stanzas to Mary, the last Poem composed by Cowper at Weston, 108, 109. Cowper resides at North-Tuddenham—removes to Mundsley, a Village on the Norfolk Coast—removes to Dereham, and thence to Dunham-Lodge, 111 to 113. Induced to revise his Homer, 1795—in September visits Mundsley again—in October returns to Dereham, and settles there for the Winter, 114. Gradual Decline and Death of Mrs. Unwin, 114. Cowper's Solicitude on the last Morning of her Life—her Funeral in Dereham, and Tablet to



her Memory, 115. The obstinate Malady of Cowper—fruitless Endeavours to cheer his dejected Spirit—infinite Merit of Mr. Johnson, in his Care to mitigate the Calamity of his revered Relation—Cowper receives a Visit from the Dowager Lady Spencer, 115 to 118. Mr. Johnson reads to him his printed and his Manuscript Poems—Cowper writes to Lady Hesketh, and receives a Visit from Sir John Throckmorton, 119. Finishes the Revisal of his Homer, March, 1799—resumes and quits his Poem on the four Ages—composes a Latin Poem—his last original English Poem, the Cast-away, 119, 120. Removes to a larger House in Dereham—translates various Latin and Greek Verses, and some Fables of Gay into Latin Verse—sends an improved Version of a Passage in his Homer to his Friend of Eartham, 122. His Health becomes more impaired—receives a Visit from Mr. Rose in March—declines, and dies on Friday, the 25th of April—buried, on the 3d of May, in the Church of Dereham, 123, 124. His Character, and Remarks on his Poetry, 124 to 163. Postscript, 163.

---

 APPENDIX.

No. 1	Original Poems	Page 165
2	Translations of Greek Verses	174
3	Translations from Horace and Virgil	186
4	Translations from various Latin Poems of Vincent Bourne, and a few Epigrams of Owen	201
5	Montes Glaciales, in Oceano Germanico natantes, with a Translation	224
6	Verses, English and Latin, to the Memory of Dr. Lloyd	227
7	Translations from the Fables of Gay	229
8	The Connoisseur, No. 119	233
	134	237
	138	240
	Motto on a Clock	245
Conclusion		246, 247



THE  
LIFE OF COWPER.

PART THE THIRD.

Οι αρετης εφιεμενοι παντες επι και τον διατελθαι παντων μαλιστα ποθεν-  
τες εκεινοι, ως αφελιματάιον οντα προς αρετης επιμελειαν.

XENOPHON.

THE active and powerful mind of Cowper wanted no long interval of rest after finishing the work of five laborious years. On the contrary, he very soon began to feel that regular hours of mental exertion were essentially requisite to his comfort and welfare.

That extraordinary proficient in the knowledge of human nature, Lord Bacon, has inserted in his list of articles conducive to health, (for his own use) one article, that may appear, at first sight, little suited to such a purpose—"heroic desires!" If we understand by this expression what he probably intended, a constant inclination and care to employ our faculties fervently and steadily on some grand object of laudable pursuit, perhaps the whole *Materia Medica* could have furnished him with nothing so likely to promote the preservation of health; especially in a frame distinguished by nerves of the most delicate and dangerous sensibility.

Cowper was himself aware of this truth, and he was looking deliberately around him for some new literary object of magnitude and importance, when his thoughts were directed to Milton, by an unexpected application from the literary merchant with whom he had corresponded, occasionally, for some years; and with whom his acquaintance, though confined to letters of business, had ripened into a cordial esteem.

The great author of the Rambler (intimately acquainted with all the troubles that are too apt to attend the votaries of literature) has said, "that a bookseller is the only Mæcenas of the modern world." Without assenting to all the eulogy and all the satire implied in this remarkable sentiment, we may take a pleasure in ob-

erving, that in the class of men so magnificently and sportively commended, there are several individuals, each of whom a writer of the most delicate manners and exalted mind may justly esteem as a pleasing associate, and as a liberal friend.

In this light Cowper regarded his bookseller, Mr. Johnson, to whom he had literally given the two volumes of his poems, with that modest and generous simplicity of spirit which formed a striking part of his character. He entertained no presumptuous ideas of their pecuniary value; and when the just applause of the world had sufficiently proved it, he nobly declined the idea of resuming a gift, which the probity of his merchant would have allowed him to recall. He was, however, so pleased by this, and by subsequent proofs of liberality in the conduct of Mr. Johnson, that on being solicited by him to embark in the adventure of preparing a magnificent edition of Milton, he readily entered into the project; and began those admirable translations from the Latin and Italian poetry of Milton, which I have formerly mentioned in print, and to which I hope to render more justice, by a plan of devoting them to the purpose of raising a monument to their author: a plan upon which I shall apply to the favour of the public in the close of these volumes.

As it is to Milton that I am in a great measure indebted for what I must ever regard as a signal blessing, the friendship of Cowper, the reader will pardon me for dwelling a little on the circumstances that produced it: circumstances which often lead me to repeat those sweet verses of my friend on the casual original of our most valuable attachments:

Mysterious are his ways, whose power  
Brings forth that unexpected hour,  
When minds, that never met before,  
Shall meet, unite, and part no more:  
It is th' allotment of the skies,  
The hand of the supremely wise,  
That guides and governs our affections,  
And plans and orders our connections.

These charming verses strike with peculiar force on my heart, when I recollect that it was an idle endeavour to make us enemies which gave rise to our intimacy, and that I was providentially conducted to Weston at a season when my presence there afforded peculiar comfort to my affectionate friend, under the pressure of a domestic affliction, which threatened to overwhelm his very tender spirits.

The entreaty of many persons, whom I wished to oblige, had engaged me to write a life of Milton, before I had the slightest suspicion that my work could interfere with the projects of any man; but I was soon surprised and concerned in hearing that I was represented in a news-paper, as an antagonist of Cowper.

I immediately wrote to him on the subject, and our correspondence soon endeared us to each other in no common degree. The series of his letters to me I value not only as memorials of a most dear and honourable friendship, but as exquisite examples of epistolary excellence. My pride might assuredly be gratified by inserting them all, as I have been requested to do, in this publication; but, I trust, I am influenced by a proper sense of duty towards my dear departed friend, in withholding them, at present, from the eye of the public. The truth is, I feel that the extreme sensibility of my affectionate correspondent led him, very frequently, to speak of me in such terms of tender partiality, that the world must not be expected to forgive him for so over-rating even the merit of a friend, till that friend is sharing with him the hallowed rest of the grave. In the mean time my readers, I hope, will approve my confining myself to such a selection from them, as appears to me necessary for the completion of this narrative; which I seize every opportunity of embellishing with numerous letters to his other correspondents.

It is time to resume the series of such letters; and in doing so I embrace, with a melancholy gratification, an opportunity of paying tender respect to the memory of a scholar and a poet, who, in 1791, solicited and obtained the regard of Cowper, and saw him, for the first time, at Eartham, in the following year.—I speak of the late professor of poetry, the Reverend James Hurdis; a man whose death must be lamented as peculiarly unseasonable, did not piety suggest to the persons most deeply afflicted by a loss so little expected, that it is irrational and irreligious to repine at those decrees of heaven which summon to early beatitude the most deserving of its servants. As this exemplary divine was tenderly idolized by several accomplished sisters, it may be hoped that his collected works will be republished by some member of his family, with a memorial of the learned, elegant, and moral writer, adapted to the extent and variety of his merit. My intercourse with him was brief indeed, but terminated with expressions of kindness, when every kind syllable derives an affecting power, from the approach of death. I had applied to him, requesting the sight of letters that I knew he had been long in the habit of receiving from Cowper: my application, to my surprise and concern, found him sinking into a fatal illness; but he kindly intimated to a beloved



sister a wish to comply with my request. To the fidelity of her affection towards a deserving brother I am indebted for the papers which I wished to see; and from which I have made such a selection as I deem most consistent with the regard I owe to both the departed poets.—Their reciprocal esteem will reflect honour on both; and it is particularly pleasing to observe the candid and liberal spirit with which Cowper attended to the wishes and encouraged the exertions of a young and modest writer, who was justly ambitious of his applause.

The date of his first letter to the author of the *Village Curate* appears to claim an earlier place in this work; but a variety of circumstances conspired to fix it here.

---

LETTER I.

To the Reverend Mr. HURDIS.

*Weston, March 6, 1791,*

SIR,

I have always entertained, and have occasionally avowed a great degree of respect for the abilities of the unknown author of the *Village Curate*—unknown at that time, but now well known, and not to me only, but to many. For before I was favoured with your obliging letter I knew your name, your place of abode, your profession, and that you had four sisters; all which I learned neither from our bookseller, nor from any of his connections: you will perceive, therefore, that you are no longer an author incognito. The writer, indeed, of many passages that have fallen from your pen could not long continue so. Let genius, true genius, conceal itself where it may, we may say of it, as the young man in Terence of his beautiful mistress—“*diu latere non potest.*”

I am obliged to you for your kind offers of service, and will not say that I shall not be troublesome to you hereafter; but at present I have no need to be so. I have, within these two days, given the very last stroke of my pen to my long translation, and what will be my next career I know not. At any rate, we shall not, I hope, hereafter be known to each other as poets only; for your writings have made me ambitious of a nearer approach to you. Your door, however, will never be opened to me. My fate and fortune have combined with natural disposition, to draw a circle round me which I cannot pass; nor have I been more than thirteen miles from home these twenty years, and so far very seldom. But you are a younger man, and therefore may not be quite so immovable: in which case, should you choose at any time to move Weston-



ward, you will always find me happy to receive you. And in the mean time I remain, with much respect, your most obedient servant, critic, and friend,

W. C.

*P. S.* I wish to know what you mean to do with Sir Thomas.\* For though I expressed doubts about his theatrical possibilities, I think him a very respectable person, and, with some improvement, well worthy of being introduced to the public.

---

## LETTER II.

To the Reverend Mr. HURDIS.

*Weston, June 13, 1791.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I ought to have thanked you for your agreeable and entertaining letter much sooner; but I have many correspondents who will not be said, nay; and have been obliged, of late, to give my last attentions to Homer: the very last indeed, for yesterday I dispatched to town, after revising them carefully, the proof-sheets of subscribers' names; among which I took special notice of yours, and am much obliged to you for it. We have contrived, or rather my bookseller and printer have contrived, (for they have never waited a moment for me) to publish as critically at the wrong time, as if my whole interest and success had depended on it. March, April, and May, said Johnson to me in a letter that I received from him in February, are the best months for publication. *Therefore*, now it is determined that Homer shall come out on the first of July, that is to say, exactly at the moment when, except a few lawyers, not a creature will be left in town who will ever care one farthing about him. To which of these two friends of mine I am indebted for this management, I know not. It does not please, but I would be a philosopher as well as a poet, and therefore make no complaint or grumble at all about it. You, I presume, have had dealings with them both—how did they manage for you? And if as they have for me, how did you behave under it? Some who love me complain that I am too passive; and I should be glad of an opportunity to justify myself by your example. The fact is, should I thunder ever so loud, no efforts of that sort will avail me now; therefore, like a good economist of my bolts, I choose to reserve them for more profitable occasions.

I am glad to find that your amusements have been so similar to mine, for in this instance, too, I seemed to have need of somebody to

\* Sir Thomas More, a Tragedy.

keep me in countenance, especially in my attention and attachment to animals. All the notice that we lords of the creation vouchsafe to bestow on the creatures, is generally to abuse them; it is well, therefore, that here and there a man should be found a little womanish, or perhaps a little childish in this matter, who will make some amends, by kissing and coaxing, and laying them in one's bosom. You remember the little ewe lamb mentioned by the Prophet Nathan: the Prophet, perhaps, invented the tale for the sake of its application to David's conscience; but it is more probable that God inspired him with it for that purpose. If he did, it amounts to a proof that he does not overlook, but, on the contrary, much notices such little partialities and kindnesses to his *dumb* creatures, as we, because we articulate, are pleased to call them.

Your sisters are fitter to judge than I, whether assembly-rooms are the places, of all others, in which the ladies may be studied to most advantage. I am an old fellow, but I had once my dancing days, as you have now; yet I could never find that I learned half so much of a woman's real character by dancing with her, as by conversing with her at home, where I could observe her behaviour at the table, at the fire-side, and in all the trying circumstances of domestic life. We are all good when we are pleased, but she is the good woman who wants not a fiddle to sweeten her. If I am wrong, the young ladies will set me right: in the mean time I will not tease you with graver arguments on the subject, especially as I have a hope, that years, and the study of the scripture, and His Spirit whose word it is, will, in due time, bring you to my way of thinking. I am not one of those sages who require that young men should be as old as themselves, before they have had time to be so.

With my love to your fair sisters, I remain, dear Sir, yours truly,  
W. C.

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### LETTER III.

To the Reverend Mr. HURDIS.

*Weston, August 9, 1791.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I never make a correspondent wait for an answer through idleness or want of proper respect for him; but if I am silent, it is because I am busy, or not well, or because I stay till something occur that may make my letter at least a little better than mere blank paper. I therefore write speedily in reply

to yours, being, at present, neither much occupied, nor at all indisposed, nor forbidden by a dearth of materials.

I wish always, when I have a new piece in hand, to be as secret as you, and there was a time when I could be so. Then I lived the life of a solitary, was not visited by a single neighbour, because I had none with whom I could associate; nor ever had an inmate. This was when I dwelt at Olney; but since I have removed to Weston the case is different. Here I am visited by all around me, and study in a room exposed to all manner of inroads. It is on the ground floor, the room in which we dine, and in which I am sure to be found by all who seek me. They find me generally at my desk, and with my work, whatever it be, before me, unless perhaps I have conjured it into its hiding-place before they have had time to enter. This, however, is not always the case, and, consequently, sooner or later, I cannot fail to be detected. Possibly you, who, I suppose, have a snug study, would find it impracticable to attend to any thing closely in an apartment exposed as mine; but use has made it familiar to me, and so familiar, that neither servants going and coming disconcert me; nor even if a lady, with an oblique glance of her eye, catches two or three lines of my MSS. do I feel myself inclined to blush, though naturally the shyest of mankind.

You did well, I believe, to cashier the subject of which you give me a recital. It certainly wants those *agreements* which are necessary to the success of any subject in verse. It is a curious story, and so far as the poor young lady was concerned, a very affecting one; but there is a coarseness in the character of the hero that would have spoiled all. In fact, I find it myself a much easier matter to write than to get a convenient theme to write on.

I am obliged to you for comparing me, as you do, both with Pope and with Homer. It is impossible, in any other way of management, to know whether the translation be well executed or not, and if well, in what degree. It was in the course of such a process that I first became dissatisfied with Pope. More than thirty years since, and when I was a young templar, I accompanied him with his original, line by line, through both poems. A fellow student of mine, a person of fine classic taste, joined himself with me in the labour. We were neither of us, as you may imagine, very diligent in our proper business.

I shall be glad if my Reviewers, whosoever they may be, will be at the pains to read me as you do; I want no praise that I am not entitled to, but of that to which I am entitled I should be loth to lose a little, having worked hard to earn it.

I would heartily second the Bishop of Salisbury, in recommend-

ing to you a close pursuit of your Hebrew studies, were it not that I wish you to publish what I may understand. Do both, and I shall be satisfied.

Your remarks, if I may but receive them soon enough to serve me in case of a new edition, will be extremely welcome.

W. C.

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LETTER IV.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

*Weston, August 9, 1791.*

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

The little that I have heard about Homer myself has been equally, or more flattering than Dr. ——'s intelligence, so that I have good reason to hope that I have not studied the old Grecian, and how to dress him, so long and so intently to no purpose. At present I am idle, both on account of my eyes, and because I know not to what to attach myself in particular. Many different plans and projects are recommended to me. Some call aloud for original verse, others for more translation, and others for other things. Providence, I hope, will direct me in my choice, for other guide I have none, nor wish for another.

God bless you, my dearest Johnny.

W. C.

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LETTER V.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*The Lodge, Sept. 14, 1791.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Whoever reviews me will, in fact, have a laborious task of it, in the performance of which he ought to move leisurely, and to exercise much critical discernment. In the mean time, my courage is kept up by the arrival of such testimonies in my favour, as give me the greatest pleasure; coming from quarters the most respectable. I have reason, therefore, to hope, that our periodical judges will not be very adverse to me, and that perhaps they may even favour me. If one man of taste and letters is pleased, another man, so qualified, can hardly be displeased; and if critics of a different description grumble, they will not, however, materially hurt me.

You, who know how necessary it is to me to be employed, will be glad to hear that I have been called to a new literary engagement, and that I have not refused it. A Milton that is to rival,



and, if possible, to exceed in splendour Boydell's Shakspeare, is in contemplation, and I am in the editor's office. Fuseli is the painter. My business will be to select notes from others, and to write original notes; to translate the Latin and Italian poems, and to give a correct text. I shall have years allowed me to do it in.

W. C.

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LETTER VI.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

*Weston, Oct. 31, 1791.*

MY DEAR JOHNNY,

Your kind and affectionate letter well deserves my thanks, and should have had them long ago, had I not been obliged lately to give my attention to a mountain of unanswered letters, which I have just now reduced to a mole-hill: yours lay at the bottom, and I have at last worked my way down to it.

It gives me great pleasure that you have found a house to your minds. May you all three be happier in it than the happiest that ever occupied it before you! But my chief delight of all is to learn that you and Kitty are so completely cured of your long and threatening maladies. I always thought highly of Dr. Kerr, but his extraordinary success in your two instances has even inspired me with an affection for him.

My eyes are much better than when I wrote last, though seldom perfectly well many days together. At this season of the year I catch perpetual colds, and shall continue to do so till I have got the better of that tenderness of habit with which the summer never fails to affect me.

I am glad that you have heard well of my work in your country. Sufficient proofs have reached me, from various quarters, that I have not ploughed the field of Troy in vain.

Were you here, I would gratify you with an enumeration of particulars; but since you are not, it must content you to be told that I have every reason to be satisfied.

Mrs. Unwin, I think, in her letter to cousin Balls, made mention of my new engagement. I have just entered on it, and therefore can, at present, say little about it.

It is a very creditable one in itself, and may I but acquit myself of it with sufficiency, it will do me honour. The commentator's part, however, is a new one to me, and one that I little thought to appear in.



Remember your promise that I shall see you in the spring.

The Hall has been full of company ever since you went, and at present my Catharina is there singing and playing like an angel.

W. C.

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LETTER VII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

*Nov.* 14, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have waited and wished for your opinion with the feelings that belong to the value I have for it, and am very happy to find it so favourable. In my table-drawer I treasure up a bundle of suffrages, sent me by those of whose approbation I was most ambitious, and shall presently insert yours among them.

I know not why we should quarrel with compound epithets: it is certain, at least, they are as agreeable to the genius of our language as to that of the Greek, which is sufficiently proved by their being admitted into our common and colloquial dialect. Black-eyed, nut-brown, crook-shank'd, hump-back'd, are all compound epithets, and, together with a thousand other such, are used continually, even by those who profess a dislike to such combinations in poetry. Why, then, do they treat with so much familiarity a thing that they say disgusts them? I doubt if they could give this question a reasonable answer; unless they should answer it by confessing themselves unreasonable.

I have made a considerable progress in the translation of Milton's Latin poems. I give them, as opportunity offers, all the variety of measure that I can. Some I render in heroic rhyme, some in stanzas, some in seven, and some in eight syllable measure, and some in blank verse. They will altogether, I hope, make an agreeable miscellany for the English reader. They are certainly good in themselves, and cannot fail to please, but by the fault of their translator.

W. C.

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LETTER VIII.

To the Reverend Mr. HURDIS.

*Weston,* Dec. 10, 1791.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am obliged to you for wishing that I were employed in some original work rather than in translation. To tell you the truth, I am of your mind; and unless I could find

another Homer, I shall promise, I believe, and vow, when I have done with Milton, never to translate again. But my veneration for our great countryman is equal to what I feel for the Grecian; and, consequently, I am happy, and feel myself honourably employed whatever I do for Milton. I am now translating his *Epitaphium Damonis*, a pastoral, in my judgment, equal to any of Virgil's Bucolics, but of which Dr. Johnson (so it pleased him) speaks, as I remember, contemptuously. But he who never saw any beauty in a rural scene was not likely to have much taste for a pastoral. *In face quiescat.*

I was charmed with your friendly offer to be my advocate with the public: should I want one, I know not where I could find a better. The reviewer in the Gentleman's Magazine grows more and more civil. Should he continue to sweeten at this rate, as he proceeds, I know not what will become of all the little modesty I have left. I have availed myself of some of his strictures, for I wish to learn from every body.

W. C.

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LETTER IX.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*Weston, Dec. 21, 1791.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It grieves me, after having indulged a little hope that I might see you in the holidays, to be obliged to disappoint myself. The occasion, too, is such as will ensure me your sympathy.

On Saturday last, while I was at my desk near the window, and Mrs. Unwin at the fire-side opposite to it, I heard her suddenly exclaim, "Oh! Mr. Cowper, don't let me fall!" I turned and saw her actually falling, together with her chair, and started to her side just in time to prevent her. She was seized with a violent giddiness, which lasted, though with some abatement, the whole day, and was attended too with some other very, very alarming symptoms. At present, however, she is relieved from the vertigo, and seems in all respects better.

She has been my faithful and affectionate nurse for many years, and consequently has a claim on all my attentions. She has them, and will have them as long as she wants them, which will probably be, at the best, a considerable time to come. I feel the shock, as you may suppose, in every nerve. God grant that there may be no repetition of it. Another such a stroke upon her would, I think, upset me completely; but at present I hold up bravely.

W. C.

## LETTER X.

To the Reverend Mr. HURDIS.

*Weston, Feb. 21, 1792,*

MY DEAR SIR,

My obligations to you, on the score of your kind and friendly remarks, demanded from me a much more expeditious acknowledgment of the numerous packets that contained them; but I have been hindered by many causes, each of which you would admit as a sufficient apology, but none of which I will mention, lest I should give too much of my paper to the subject. My acknowledgments are likewise due to your fair sister, who has transcribed so many sheets in so neat a hand, and with so much accuracy.

At present I have no leisure for Homer, but shall certainly find leisure to examine him, with a reference to your strictures, before I send him a second time to the printer. This I am at present unwilling to do, choosing rather to wait, if that may be, till I shall have undergone the discipline of all the reviewers; none of whom have yet taken me in hand, the Gentleman's Magazine excepted. By several of his remarks I have been benefited, and shall no doubt be benefited by the remarks of all,

Milton at present engrosses me altogether. His Latin pieces I have translated, and have begun with the Italian. These are few, and will not detain me long. I shall then proceed immediately to deliberate upon, and to settle the plan of my commentary, which I have hitherto had but little time to consider. I look forward to it, for this reason, with some anxiety. I trust, at least, that this anxiety will cease, when I have once satisfied myself about the best manner of conducting it. But, after all, I seem to fear more the labour to which it calls me, than any great difficulty with which it is likely to be attended. To the labours of versifying I have no objection, but to the labours of criticism I am new, and apprehend that I shall find them wearisome. Should that be the case, I shall be dull, and must be contented to share the censure of being so with almost all the commentators that have ever existed.

I have expected, but not wondered that I have not received, Sir Thomas More, and the other MSS. you promised me; because my silence has been such, considering how loudly I was called upon to write, that you must have concluded me either dead or dying, and did not choose, perhaps, to trust them to executors.

W. C.

## LETTER XI.

To the Reverend Mr. HURDIS.

DEAR SIR,

*Weston, March 2, 1792.*

I have this moment finished a comparison of your remarks with my text, and feel so sensibly my obligations to your great accuracy and kindness, that I cannot deny myself the pleasure of expressing them immediately. I only wish that, instead of revising the two first books of the Iliad, you could have found leisure to revise the whole two poems, sensible how much my work would have benefited.

I have not always adopted your lines, though often, perhaps, at least, as good as my own; because there will and must be dissimilarity of manner between two so accustomed to the pen as we are. But I have left few passages go unamended which you seemed to think exceptionable; and this not at all from complaisance: for in such a cause I would not sacrifice an iota on that principle, but on clear conviction.

I have as yet heard nothing from Johnson about the two MSS. you announce, but feel ashamed that I should want your letter to remind me of your obliging offer to inscribe Sir Thomas More to me, should you resolve to publish him. Of my consent to such a measure you need not doubt. I am covetous of respect and honour from all such as you.

Tame hare, at present, I have none. But to make amends, I have a beautiful little spaniel called Beau, to whom I will give the kiss your sister Sally intended for the former. Unless she should command me to bestow it elsewhere, it shall attend on her directions.

I am going to take a last dinner with a most agreeable family, who have been my only neighbours ever since I have lived at Weston. On Monday they go to London, and in the summer to an estate in Oxfordshire, which is to be their home in future. The occasion is not at all a pleasant one to me, nor does it leave me spirits to add more than that I am, dear Sir, most truly yours,

W. C.

## LETTER XII.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

*Weston, March 11, 1792.*

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

You talk of primroses that you pulled on Candlemas day; but what think you of me, who heard a Night-

ingale on New-year's day? Perhaps I am the only man in England who can boast of such good fortune: good, indeed; for if it was at all an omen, it could not be an unfavourable one. The winter, however, is now making himself amends, and seems the more peevish for having been encroached on at so undue a season. Nothing less than a large slice out of the spring will satisfy him.

Lady Hesketh left us yesterday. She intended, indeed, to have left us four days sooner: but in the evening before the day fixed for her departure, snow enough fell to occasion just so much delay of it.

We have faint hopes that in the month of May we shall see her again. I know that you have had a letter from her, and you will no doubt have the grace not to make her wait long for an answer.

We expect Mr. Rose on Tuesday; but he stays with us only till the Saturday following. With him I shall have some conferences on the subject of Homer, respecting a new edition I mean, and some perhaps on the subject of Milton; on him I have not yet begun to comment, or even fix the time when I shall.

Forget not your promised visit!

W. C.\*

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### TO THE NIGHTINGALE,

*Which the Author heard sing on New-Year's Day, 1792.*

Whence is it, that, amaz'd, I hear,  
 From yonder wither'd spray,  
 This foremost morn of all the year,  
 The melody of May?

And why, since thousands would be proud  
 Of such a favour shown,  
 Am I selected from the crowd,  
 To witness it alone?

Sing'st thou, sweet Philomel, to me,  
 For that I also long  
 Have practis'd in the groves like thee,  
 Though not like thee in song?

\* *Note by the Editor.*—I annex to this letter the stanzas that Cowper composed on the wonderful incident here mentioned.



Or sing'st thou rather under force  
 Of some divine command,  
 Commission'd to presage a course  
 Of happier days at hand?

Thrice welcome, then! for many a long  
 And joyous year have I,  
 As thou to-day, put forth my song  
 Beneath a wintry sky.

But thee no wintry skies can harm,  
 Who only need'st to sing,  
 To make ev'n January charm,  
 And ev'ry season Spring.

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LETTER XIII.

To the Reverend Mr. HURDIS.

*Weston, March 23, 1792.*

DEAR SIR,

I have read your play carefully, and with great pleasure: it seems now to be a performance that cannot fail to do you much credit. Yet, unless my memory deceives me, the scene between Cecilia and Heron in the garden has lost something that pleased me much when I saw it first; and I am not sure that you have not likewise obliterated an account of Sir Thomas's execution, that I found very pathetic. It would be strange if, in these two particulars, I should seem to miss what never existed: you will presently know whether I am as good at remembering what I never saw, as I am at forgetting what I have seen. But if I am right, I cannot help recommending the omitted passages to your re-consideration. If the play were designed for representation, I should be apt to think Cecilia's first speech rather too long, and should prefer to have it broken into dialogue, by an interposition now and then from one of her sisters. But since it is designed, as I understand, for the closet only, that objection seems of no importance; at no rate, however, would I expunge it, because it is both prettily imagined, and elegantly written.

I have read your *cursorry remarks*, and am much pleased both with the style and the argument. Whether the latter be new or not I am not competent to judge: if it be, you are entitled to much praise for the invention of it. Where other data are wanting to ascertain the time when an author of many pieces wrote each in particular, there can be no better criterion by which to determine

the point, than the more or less proficiency manifested in the composition. Of this proficiency, where it appears, and of those plays in which it appears not, you seem to me to have judged well and truly; and, consequently, I approve of your arrangement.

I attended, as you desired me, in reading the character of Cecilia, to the hint you gave me concerning your sister Sally, and give you joy of such a sister. This, however, not exclusively of the rest, for though they may not all be Cecílias, I have a strong persuasion that they are all very amiable.

W. C.

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#### LETTER XIV.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, March 25, 1792.*

MY DEAREST COZ.

Mr. Rose's longer stay than he at first intended was the occasion of the longer delay of my answer to your note, as you may both have perceived by the date thereof, and learned from his information. It was a daily trouble to me to see it lying in the window-seat, while I knew you were in expectation of its arrival. By this time I presume you have seen him, and have seen likewise Mr. Hayley's friendly letter and complimentary sonnet, as well as the letter of the honest Quaker; all of which, at least the two former, I shall be glad to receive again at a fair opportunity. Mr. Hayley's letter slept six weeks in Johnson's custody. It was necessary I should answer it without delay, and accordingly I answered it the very evening on which I received it, giving him to understand, among other things, how much vexation the bookseller's folly had cost me, who had detained it so long; especially on account of the distress that I know it must have occasioned to him also. From his reply, which the return of the post brought me, I learn that, in the long interval of my non-correspondence, he had suffered anxiety and mortification enough; so much that I dare say he had made twenty vows never to hazard again either letter or compliment to an unknown author. What, indeed, could he imagine less, than that I meant, by such an obstinate silence, to tell him that I valued neither him nor his praises, nor his proffered friendship; in short, that I considered him as a rival, and therefore, like a true author, hated and despised him. He is now, however, convinced that I love him, as indeed I do; and I account him the chief acquisition that my own verse has ever procured me. Brute should I be if I did not, for he promises me every assistance in his power.

I have likewise a very pleasing letter from Mr. Park, which I wish you were here to read; and a very pleasing poem that came inclosed in it for my revisal, written when he was only twenty years of age, yet wonderfully well written, though wanting some correction.

To Mr. Hurdis I return Sir Thomas More to-morrow, having revised it a second time. He is now a very respectable figure, and will do my friend, who gives him to the public this spring, considerable credit.

W. C.

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LETTER XV.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*March 30, 1792.*

My mornings, ever since you went, have been given to my correspondents: this morning I have already written a long letter to Mr. Park, giving my opinion of his poem, which is a favourable one. I forget whether I showed it to you when you were here, and even whether I had then received it. He has genius and delicate taste; and if he were not an engraver, might be one of our first hands in poetry.

W. C.

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LETTER XVI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*Weston, April 5, 1792.*

You talk, my dear friend, as John Bunyan says, like one who has the egg-shell still upon his head. You talk of the mighty favours that you have received from me, and forget entirely those for which I am indebted to you; but though you forget them, I shall not, nor ever think that I have requited you, so long as any opportunity presents itself of rendering you the smallest service: small, indeed, is all that I can ever hope to render.

You now perceive, and sensibly, that not without reason I complained, as I used to do, of those tiresome rogues the printers. Bless yourself that you have not two thick quartos to bring forth, as I had. My vexation was always much increased by this reflection; they are every day, and all day long, employed in printing for somebody, and why not for me? This was adding mortification to disappointment, so that I often lost all patience.

The suffrage of Doctor Robertson makes more than amends for the scurvy jest passed upon me by the wag unknown. I re-

gard him not; nor, except for about two moments after I first heard of his doings, have I ever regarded him. I have somewhere a secret enemy; I know not for what cause he should be so; but he, I imagine, supposes that he has a cause: it is well, however, to have but one; and I will take all the care I can not to increase the number.

I have begun my notes, and am playing the commentator manfully. The worst of it is that I am anticipated in almost all my opportunities to shine by those who have gone before me.

W. C.

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LETTER XVII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Weston, April 6, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

God grant that this friendship of ours may be a comfort to us all the rest of our days: in a world where true friendships are rarities, and especially where suddenly formed, they are apt soon to terminate. But, as I said before, I feel a disposition of heart toward you, that I never felt for one whom I had never seen; and that shall prove itself, I trust, in the event, a propitious omen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Horace says somewhere, though I may quote it amiss, perhaps, for I have a terrible memory,

*Utrumque nostrum incredibili modo  
Consentiū astrum.*—

\* \* \* Our stars consent, at least have had an influence somewhat similar in another and more important article.—\* \* \*

It gives me the sincerest pleasure that I may hope to see you at Weston; for as to any migrations of mine, they must, I fear, notwithstanding the joy I should feel in being a guest of yours, be still considered in the light of impossibilities. Come then, my friend, and be as welcome, as the country people say here, as the flowers in May. I am happy, as I say, in the expectation; but the fear, or rather the consciousness that I shall not answer on a nearer view, makes it a trembling kind of happiness, and a doubtful.

After that privacy which I have mentioned above, I went to Huntingdon: soon after my arrival there I took up my quarters



at the house of the Reverend Mr. Unwin ; I lived with him while he lived, and ever since his death have lived with his widow. Her, therefore, you will find mistress of the house ; and I judge of you aniss, or you will find her just such as you would wish. To me she has been often a nurse, and invariably the kindest friend, through a thousand adversities that I have had to grapple with in the course of almost thirty years. I thought it better to introduce her to you thus, than to present her to you at your coming, quite a stranger.

Bring with you any books that you think may be useful to my commentatorship, for, with you for an interpreter, I shall be afraid of none of them. And, in truth, if you think that you shall want them, you must bring books for your own use also ; for they are an article with which I am *heinously unprovided*, being much in the condition of the man whose library Pope describes, as

No mighty store !  
His own works neatly bound, and little more !

You shall know how this has come to pass hereafter.

Tell me, my friend, are your letters in your own hand writing ? If so, I am in pain for your eyes, lest, by such frequent demands upon them, I should hurt them. I had rather write you three letters for one, much as I prize your letters, than *that* should happen. And now, for the present, adieu—I am going to accompany Milton into the lake of fire and brimstone, having just begun my annotations.

W. C.

### LETTER XVIII.

To the Reverend Mr. HURDIS.

*Weston, April 8, 1792.*

MY DEAR SIR,

Your entertaining and pleasant letter, resembling in that respect, all that I receive from you, deserved a more expeditious answer, and should have had what it so well deserved, had it not reached me at a time when, deeply in debt to all my correspondents, I had letters to write without number ; like autumnal leaves that strew the brooks—in *Vallombrosa* ; the unanswered farrago lay before me. If I quote at all, you must expect me henceforth to quote none but Milton, since, for a long time to come, I shall be occupied with him only.

I was much pleased with the extract you gave me from your sister Eliza's letter : she writes very elegantly, and (if I might say



it without seeming to flatter you) I should say much in the manner of her brother. It is well for your sister Sally, that gloomy Dis is already a married man; else, perhaps, finding her, as he found Proserpine, studying Botany in the fields, he might transport her to his own flowerless abode, where all her hopes of improvement in that science would be at an end for ever.

What letter of the 10th of December is that which you say you have not yet answered? Consider, it is April now, and I never remember any thing that I write half so long. But perhaps it relates to Calchas, for I do remember that you have not yet furnished me with the secret history of him and his family, which I demanded from you. Adieu. Yours most sincerely,

W. C.

I rejoice that you are so well with the learned Bishop of Sarum, and well remember how he ferreted the vermin Lauder out of all his hidings, when I was a boy at Westminster.

I have not yet studied with your last remarks before me, but hope soon to find an opportunity.

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#### LETTER XIX.

To Lady THROCKMORTON.

MY DEAR LADY FROG,

*April 16, 1792.*

I thank you for your letter, as sweet as it was short, and as sweet as good news could make it. You encourage a hope that has made me happy ever since I have entertained it; and if my wishes can hasten the event, it will not be long suspended. As to your jealousy, I mind it not, or only to be pleased with it. I shall say no more on the subject at present than this, that of all ladies living, a certain lady, whom I need not name, would be the lady of my choice for a certain gentleman, were the whole sex admitted to my election.

What a delightful anecdote is that which you tell me of a young lady detected in the very act of stealing our Catharina's praises? Is it possible that she can survive the shame, the mortification of such a discovery? Can she ever see the same company again, or any company that she can suppose, by the remotest possibility, may have heard the tidings? If she can, she must have an assurance equal to her vanity. A lady in London stole my song on the Broken Rose, or rather would have stolen and have passed it for her own. But she, too, was unfortunate in her attempt; for there happened to be a female cousin of mine in company, who knew that I had written it. It is very flattering to a poet's pride, that the ladies should thus hazard every thing for the sake of appropriating

his verses. I may say with Milton, "that I am fallen *on evil tongues and evil days*," being not only plundered of that which belongs to me, but being charged with that which does not. Thus it seems (and I have learned it from more quarters than one) that a report is, and has been somewhat current in this and the neighbouring counties, that though I have given myself the air of declaiming against the slave trade in the *Task*, I am, in reality, a friend to it; and last night I received a letter from Joe Rye, to inform me that I have been much traduced and calumniated on this account. Not knowing how I could better, or more effectually refute the scandal, I have this morning sent a copy to the Northampton paper, prefaced by a short letter to the printer, specifying the occasion. The verses are in honour of Mr. Wilberforce, and sufficiently expressive of my present sentiments on the subject. You are a wicked fair one for disappointing us of our expected visit, and therefore out of mere spite I will not insert them. I have been very ill these ten days, and for the same spite's sake will not tell you what has ailed me. But lest you should die of a fright, I will have the mercy to tell you that I am recovering.

Mrs. G— and her little ones are gone, but your brother is still here. He told me that he had some expectations of Sir John at Weston; if he comes, I shall most heartily rejoice once more to see him at a table so many years his own.\* W. C.

## SONNET,

To WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esquire.

Thy country, Wilberforce, with just disdain,  
 Hears thee, by cruel men and impious call'd  
 Fanatic, for thy zeal to loose th' enthrall'd  
 From exile, public sale, and slav'ry's chain.  
 Friend of the poor, the wrong'd, the fetter-gall'd,  
 Fear not lest labour such as thine be vain!  
 Thou hast achiev'd a part; hast gain'd the ear  
 Of Britain's Senate to thy glorious cause:  
 Hope smiles, Joy springs, and though cold Caution pause  
 And weave delay, the better hour is near,  
 That shall remunerate thy toils severe  
 By peace for Afric, fenc'd with British laws.  
 Enjoy what thou hast won, esteem and love  
 From all the just on earth, and all the blest above!

\* Note by the Editor.—The following Sonnet, not printed in the collected works of Cowper, is the poem that he alluded to in this letter.

## LETTER XX.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, May 5, 1792.**A January Storm.*

MY DEAREST COZ.

I rejoice, as thou reasonably supposest me to do, in the matrimonial news communicated in your last. Not that it was altogether news to me, for twice I had received broad hints of it from Lady Frog, by letter, and several times *viva voce* while she was here. But she enjoined *me* secrecy as well as *you*, and you know that all secrets are safe with me; safer far than the winds in the bags of Æolus. I know not, in fact, the lady whom it would give me more pleasure to call Mrs. Courtney, than the lady in question; partly because I know her, but especially because I know her to be all that I can wish in a neighbour.

I have often observed that there is a regular alternation of good and evil in the lot of men, so that a favourable incident may be considered as the harbinger of an unfavourable one, and *vice versa*. Dr. Madan's experience witnesses the truth of this observation. One day he gets a broken head, and the next a mitre to heal it. I rejoice that he has met with so effectual a cure, though my joy is not unmingled with concern; for till now I had some hope of seeing him; but since I live in the north, and his episcopal call is in the west, that is a gratification, I suppose, which I must no longer look for.

My sonnet, which I sent you, was printed in the Northampton paper last week; and this week it produced me a complimentary one in the same paper, which served to convince me, at least, by the matter of it, that my own was not published without occasion, and that it had answered its purpose.

My correspondence with Hayley proceeds briskly, and is very affectionate on both sides. I expect him here in about a fortnight, and wish heartily, with Mrs. Unwin, that you would give him a meeting. I have promised him, indeed, that he shall find us alone, but you are one of the family.

I wish much to print the following lines in one of the daily papers. Lord S's. vindication of the poor culprit, in the affair of Cheit-sing, has confirmed me in the belief that he has been injuriously treated, and I think it an act merely of justice to take a little notice of him.

To WARREN HASTINGS, Esquire.

*By an old School-fellow of his at Westminster.*

Hastings! I knew thee young, and of a mind,  
 While young, humane, conversable and kind;  
 Nor can I well believe thee, gentle *then*,  
 Now grown a villain, and the *worst* of men:  
 But rather some suspect, who have oppress'd  
 And worried thee, as not themselves the *BEST*.

If you will take the pains to send them to thy news-monger, I hope thou wilt do well. Adieu.

W. C.

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LETTER XXI.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

*May 20, 1792.*

MY DEAREST OF ALL JOHNNYS,

I am not sorry that your ordination is postponed. A year's learning and wisdom, added to your present stock, will not be more than enough to satisfy the demands of your function. Neither am I sorry that you find it difficult to fix your thoughts to the serious point at all times. It proves, at least, that you attempt and wish to do it; and these are good symptoms. Woe to those who enter on the ministry of the gospel without having previously asked, at least, from God, a mind and spirit suited to their occupation, and whose experience never differs from itself; because they are always alike vain, light, and inconsiderate. It is, therefore, matter of great joy to me to hear you complain of levity, and such it is to Mrs. Unwin. She is, I thank God, tolerably well, and loves you. As to the time of your journey hither, the sooner after June the better; till then we shall have company.

I forget not my debts to your dear sister, and your aunt Balls. Greet them both with a brother's kiss, and place it to my account. I will write to them when Milton, and a thousand other engagements, will give me leave. Mr. Hayley is here on a visit. We have formed a friendship that, I trust, will last for life, and render us an edifying example to all future poets.

Adieu: lose no time in coming after the time mentioned.

W. C.

The reader is informed, by the close of the last letter, that I was, at this time, the guest of Cowper. Our meeting, so singularly produced, was a source of reciprocal delight: we looked cheerfully forward to the unclouded enjoyment of many social and literary hours.

My host, though now in his sixty-first year, appeared as happily exempt from all the infirmities of advanced life, as friendship could wish him to be; and his more elderly companion, not materially oppressed by the age of seventy-two, discovered a benevolent alertness of character, that seemed to promise a continuance of their domestic comfort. Their reception of me was kindness itself. I was enchanted to find that the manners and conversation of Cowper resembled his poetry, charming by unaffected elegance and the graces of a benevolent spirit. I looked with affectionate veneration and pleasure on the lady, who, having devoted her life and fortune to the service of this tender and sublime genius, in watching over him with maternal vigilance through many years of the darkest calamity, appeared to be now enjoying a reward justly due to the noblest exertions of friendship, in contemplating the health and renown of the poet, whom she had the happiness to preserve.

It seemed hardly possible to survey human nature in a more touching and more satisfactory point of view.—Their tender attention to each other, their simple devout gratitude for the mercies which they had experienced together, and their constant, but unaffected propensity to impress on the mind and heart of a new friend, the deep sense which they incessantly felt of their mutual obligations to each other, afforded me very singular gratification; which my reader will conceive the more forcibly, when he has perused the following exquisite sonnet, addressed by Cowper to Mrs. Unwin.

#### SONNET.

Mary! I want a lyre with other strings;  
 Such aid from heaven as some have feign'd they drew!  
 An eloquence scarce given to mortals, new,  
 And undebas'd by praise of meaner things!  
 That ere through age or woe I shed my wings,  
 I may record thy worth, with honour due,  
 In verse as musical as thou art true,  
 Verse, that immortalizes whom it sings!



But thou hast little need: there is a book  
 By seraphs writ, with beams of heavenly light,  
 On which the eyes of God not rarely look;  
 A chronicle of actions just and bright!

There all thy deeds, my faithful Mary, shine,  
 And since thou own'st that praise, I spare thee mine.

The delight that I derived from a perfect view of the virtues, the talents, and the present domestic enjoyments of Cowper, was suddenly overcast by the darkest and most painful anxiety.

After passing our mornings in social study, we usually walked out together at noon. In returning from one of our rambles, around the pleasant village of Weston, we were met by Mr. Greatheed, an accomplished minister of the gospel, who resides at Newport-Pagnel, and whom Cowper described to me in terms of cordial esteem.

He came forth to meet us as we drew near the house, and it was soon visible from his countenance and manner, that he had ill news to impart. After the most tender preparation that humanity could devise, he acquainted Cowper that Mrs. Unwin was under the immediate pressure of a paralytic attack.

My agitated friend rushed to the sight of the sufferer. He returned to me in a state that alarmed me in the highest degree for his faculties. His first speech to me was wild in the extreme. My answer would appear little less so, but it was addressed to the predominant fancy of my unhappy friend; and, with the blessing of heaven, it produced an instantaneous calm in his troubled mind.

From that moment he rested on my friendship with such mild and cheerful confidence, that his affectionate spirit regarded me as sent providentially to support him in a season of the severest affliction.

A very fortunate incident enabled me to cheer him by a little show of medical assistance, in a form that was highly beneficial to his compassionate mind, whatever its real influence might be on the palsied limbs of our interesting patient.

Having formerly provided myself with an electrical apparatus, for the purpose of applying it medicinally to counteract a continual tendency to inflammation in the eyes, I had used it occasionally, for several years, in trying to relieve various maladies in my rustic neighbours; often, indeed, with no success, but now and then with the happiest effect. I wished to try this powerful, though uncertain remedy on the present occasion; and inquired most

eagerly if the village of Weston could produce an electrical machine.—It was hardly to be expected; but it so happened, that a worthy inhabitant of Weston, a man whom Cowper regarded for uncommon gentleness of manners, and for an ingenious mind, possessed exactly such an apparatus as we wanted, which he had partly constructed himself.

This good man, Mr. Socket, was absent from the village, but his wife, for whose relief the apparatus had been originally formed, most readily lent it to her suffering neighbour. With this seasonable aid, seconded by medicines probably more efficacious, from a physician (of consummate skill and benevolence, united to the most fascinating manners) whom I was then so happy as to reckon in the list of my living friends, Mrs. Unwin was gradually restored.

But the progress of her recovery, and its influence on the tender spirits of Cowper, will sufficiently appear in the following letters.—I shall have a mournful pleasure in adding to these a few verses, in which the gratitude of Cowper has celebrated, most tenderly, the kindness of the late Dr. Austin, the physician to whom I have alluded, and whose memory is most deservedly dear to me. The extreme tenderness of Cowper is, indeed, very forcibly displayed in that generous excess of praise with which he speaks of my services on his sudden affliction.

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#### LETTER XXII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, May 24, 1792.*

I wish with all my heart, my dearest coz. that I had not ill news for the subject of the present letter. My friend, my Mary, has again been attacked by the same disorder that threatened me last year with the loss of her, and of which you were yourself a witness. Gregson would not allow that first stroke to be paralytic, but this he acknowledges to be so; and with respect to the former, I never had myself any doubt that it was; but this has been much the severest. Her speech has been almost unintelligible from the moment that she was struck: it is with difficulty that she opens her eyes, and she cannot keep them open; the muscles necessary to the purpose being contracted; and as to self-moving powers, from place to place, and the use of her right hand and arm, she has entirely lost them.

It has happened well, that, of all men living, the man most qualified to assist and comfort me is here, though till within these few days I never saw him, and a few weeks since had no expectation that I ever should. You have already guessed that I mean Hayley—

Hayley, who loves me as if he had known me from my cradle. When he returns to town, as he must, alas, too soon, he will pay his respects to you.

I will not conclude without adding that our poor patient is beginning, I hope, to recover from this stroke also; but her amendment is slow, as must be expected at her time of life, and in such a disorder. I am as well myself as you have ever known me in a time of much trouble, and even better.

It was not possible to prevail on Mrs. Unwin to let me send for Dr. Kerr, but Hayley has written to his friend, Dr. Austin, a representation of her case, and we expect his opinion and advice to-morrow. In the mean time, we have borrowed an electrical machine from our neighbour Socket, the effect of which she tried yesterday and the day before, and we think it has been of material service.

She was seized while Hayley and I were walking, and Mr. Greatheed, who called while we were absent, was with her.

I forgot in my last to thank thee for the proposed amendments of thy friend. Whoever he is, make my compliments to him, and thank him. The passages to which he objects have been all altered, and when he shall see them new dressed, I hope he will like them better.

W. C.

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### LETTER XXIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, May 26, 1792.*

MY DEAREST COZ.

Knowing that you will be anxious to learn how we go on, I write a few lines to inform you that Mrs. Unwin daily recovers a little strength, and a little power of utterance; but she seems strongest, and her speech is more distinct in a morning. Hayley has been all in all to us on this very afflictive occasion. Love him, I charge you, dearly for my sake. Where could I have found a man, except himself, who could have made himself so necessary to me in so short a time, that I absolutely know not how to live without him?

Adieu, my dear sweet Coz. Mrs. Unwin, as plainly as her poor lips can speak, sends her best love, and Hayley threatens in a few days to lay close siege to your affections in person.

W. C.

There is some hope, I find, that the Chancellor may continue in office, and I shall be glad if he does; because we have no single man worthy to succeed him.

I open my letter again to thank you, my dearest coz. for yours just received. Though happy, as you well know, to see *you* at all times, we have no need, and I trust shall have none, to trouble you with a journey made on purpose; yet once again, I am willing and desirous to believe, we shall be a happy trio at Weston; but, unless necessity dictates a journey of charity, I wish all yours hither to be made for pleasure. Farewell—Thou shalt know how we go on.

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To Dr. AUSTIN,

*Of Cecil Street, London.*

Austin! accept a grateful verse from me!  
 The poet's treasure! no inglorious fee!  
 Lov'd by the muses, thy ingenuous mind  
 Pleasing requital in a verse may find;  
 Verse oft has dash'd the scythe of time aside,  
 Immortalizing names, which else had died:  
 And Oh! could I command the glittering wealth,  
 With which sick kings are glad to purchase health;  
 Yet, if extensive fame, and sure to live,  
 Were in the power of verse like mine to give,  
 I would not recompence his art with less,  
 Who, giving Mary health, heals my distress.

Friend of my friend! I love thee, though unknown,  
 And boldly call thee, being his, my own.

W. C.

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LETTER XXIV.

To Mrs. BODHAM.

*Weston, June 4, 1792.*

MY DEAREST ROSE,

I am not such an ungrateful and insensible animal as to have neglected you thus long without a reason.

\* \* \* \* \*

I cannot say that I am sorry that our dear Johnny finds the pulpit door shut against him at present. He is young, and can afford to wait another year: neither is it to be regretted, that his time of preparation for an office of so much importance as that of a minister

of God's word, should have been a little protracted. It is easier to direct the movements of a great army, than to guide a few souls to heaven; the way is narrow, and full of snares, and the guide himself has the most difficulties to encounter. But I trust he will do well. He is single in his views, honest-hearted, and desirous, by prayer and study of the scripture, to qualify himself for the service of his great master, who will suffer no such man to fail for want of his aid and protection. Adieu.

W. C.

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LETTER XXV.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, June 3, 1792.*

*All's Well.*

Which words I place as conspicuously as possible, and prefix them to my letter, to save you the pain, my friend and brother, of a moment's anxious speculation. Poor Mary proceeds in her amendment still, and improves, I think, even at a swifter rate than when you left her. The stronger she grows, the faster she gathers strength, which is perhaps the natural course of recovery. She walked so well this morning, that she told me at my first visit, she had entirely forgot her illness, and she spoke so distinctly, and had so much her usual countenance, that, had it been possible, she would have made me forget it too.

Returned from my walk, blown to tatters—found two dear things in the study, your letter, and my Mary! She is bravely well, and your beloved epistle does us both good. I found your kind pencil-note in my song-book, as soon as I came down on the morning of your departure; and Mary was vexed to the heart, that the simpletons who watched her supposed her asleep, when she was not, for she learned soon after you were gone, that you would have peeped at her, had you known her to have been awake. I, perhaps, might have had a peep too, and therefore was as vexed as she: but if it please God, we shall make ourselves large amends for all lost peeps by and by at Eartham.

W. C.

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LETTER XXVI.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, June 5, 1792.*

Yesterday was a noble day with us—speech almost perfect—eyes open almost the whole day, without



any effort to keep them so; and the step wonderfully improved. But the night has been almost a sleepless one, owing partly, I believe, to her having had as much sleep again as usual the night before: for even when she is in tolerable health, she hardly ever sleeps well two nights together. I found her, accordingly, a little out of spirits this morning, but still insisting on it that she is better. Indeed, she always tells me so, and will probably die with those very words upon her lips. They will be true then, at least, for then she will be best of all. She is now (the clock has just struck eleven) endeavouring, I believe, to get a little sleep, for which reason I do not yet let her know that I have received your letter.

Can I ever honour you enough for your zeal to serve me? Truly I think not: I am, however, so sensible of the love I owe you on this account, that I every day regret the acuteness of your feelings for me, convinced that they expose you to much trouble, mortification, and disappointment. I have, in short, a poor opinion of my destiny, as I told you when you were here; and though I believe that if any man living can do me good, you will, I cannot yet persuade myself, that even you will be successful in attempting it. But it is no matter; you are yourself a good which I can never value enough, and whether rich or poor in other respects, I shall always account myself better provided for than I deserve, with such a friend at my back as you. Let it please God to continue to me my William and Mary, and I will be more reasonable than to grumble.

I rose this morning wrapt round with a cloud of melancholy, and with a heart full of fears; but if I see Mary's amendment a little advanced, when she rises, I shall be better.

I have just been with her again. Except that she is fatigued for want of sleep, she seems as well as yesterday. The post brings me a letter from Hurdis, who is broken-hearted for a dying sister. Had we eyes sharp enough, we should see the arrows of death flying in all directions, and account it a wonder that we, and our friends, escape them but a single day.

W. C.

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LETTER XXVII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, June 7, 1792.*

Of what materials can you suppose me made, if, after all the rapid proofs that you have given me of your friendship, I do not love you with all my heart, and regret your absence continually? But you must permit me, nevertheless, to be

melancholy now and then; or if you will not, I must be so without your permission; for that sable thread is so intermixed with the very thread of my existence as to be inseparable from it, at least while I exist in the body. Be content, therefore, let me sigh and groan, but always be sure that I love you. You will be well assured that I should not have indulged myself in this rhapsody about myself, and my melancholy, had my present mood been of that complexion, or had not our poor Mary seemed still to advance in her recovery. So in fact she does, and has performed several little feats to-day; such as either she could not perform at all, or very feebly, while you were with us.

I shall be glad if you have seen Johnny, as I call him, my Norfolk cousin; he is a sweet lad, but as shy as a bird. It costs him always two or three days to open his mouth before a stranger; but when he does, he is sure to please by the innocent cheerfulness of his conversation. His sister, too, is one of my idols, for the resemblance she bears to my mother.

Mary and you have all my thoughts; and how should it be otherwise? She looks well, is better, and loves you dearly.

Adieu, my brother.

W. C.

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### LETTER XXVIII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, June 10, 1792.*

I do, indeed, anxiously wish that every thing you do may prosper; and should I at last prosper by your means, shall taste double sweetness in prosperity for that reason.

I rose this morning, as I usually do, with a mind all in sables. In this mood I presented myself to Mary's bed-side, whom I found, though after many hours lying awake, yet cheerful, and not to be affected with my desponding humour. It is a great blessing to us both, that poor feeble thing as she is, she has a most invincible courage, and a trust in God's goodness that nothing shakes. She is now in the study, and is certainly, in some degree, better than she was yesterday; but how to measure that little I know not, except by saying that it is just perceptible.

I am glad that you have seen my Johnny of Norfolk, because I know it will be a comfort to you to have seen your successor. He arrived, to my great joy, yesterday; and not having bound himself to any particular time of going, will, I hope, stay long with us. You are now once more snug in your retreat; and I give you joy of your return to it, after the bustle in which you have lived since you left Weston. Weston mourns your absence, and will mourn it

till she sees you again. What is to become of Milton I know not: I do nothing but scribble to you, and seem to have no relish for any other employment. I have, however, in pursuit of your idea, to compliment Darwin, put a few stanza's together, which I shall subjoin; you will easily give them all that you find they want, and match the song with another.

I am now going to walk with Johnny, much cheered since I began writing to you, and by Mary's looks and good spirits.

W. C.

To Dr. DARWIN,

*Author of the* BOTANIC GARDEN.

Two poets (poets, by report,  
Not oft so well agree)  
Sweet harmonist of Flora's court!  
Conspire to honour thee.

They best can judge a poet's worth,  
Who oft themselves have known  
The pangs of a poetic birth,  
By labours of their own.

We, therefore, pleas'd, extol thy song,  
Though various, yet complete;  
Rich in embellishment as strong,  
And learn'd as it is sweet.

No envy mingles with our praise;  
Though, could our hearts repine  
At any poet's happier lays,  
They would, they must, at thine.

But we, in mutual bondage knit  
Of Friendship's closest tie,  
Can gaze on even Darwin's wit  
With an unjaundic'd eye:

And deem the bard, whoe'er he be,  
And howsoever known,  
Who would not twine a wreath for thee,  
Unworthy of his own.

## LETTER XXIX.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*June 19, 1792.*

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Thus have I filled a whole page to my dear William of Eartham, and have not said a syllable yet about my Mary—a sure sign that she goes on well. Be it known to you, that we have these four days discarded our sedan with two elbows. Here is no more carrying, or being carried, but she walks up stairs boldly, with one hand upon the balustrade, and the other under my arm, and in like manner she comes down in a morning. Still I confess she is feeble, and misses much of her former strength. The weather, too, is sadly against her; it deprives her of many a good turn in the orchard, and fifty times I have wished this very day, that Dr. Darwin's scheme of giving rudders and sails to the Ice-islands, that spoil all our summers, were actually put in practice. So should we have gentle airs instead of churlish blasts, and those everlasting sources of bad weather being once navigated into the southern hemisphere, my Mary would recover as fast again. We are both of your mind respecting the journey to Eartham, and think that July, if by that time she have strength for the journey, will be better than August. We shall have more long days before us, and then we shall want as much for our return as for our going forth. This, however, must be left to the Giver of all good. If our visit to you be according to his will, he will smooth our way before us, and appoint the time of it; and I thus speak, not because I wish to seem a saint in your eyes, but because my poor Mary is actually one, and would not set her foot over the threshold to save her life, unless she had, or thought she had, God's free permission. With that she would go through floods and fire, though without it she would be afraid of every thing; afraid even to visit you, dearly as she loves, and much as she longs to see you.

W. C.

## LETTER XXX.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, June 27, 1792.*

Well then—let us talk about this journey to Eartham. You wish me to settle the time of it, and I wish with all my heart to be able to do so, living in hopes, meanwhile, that I shall be able to do it soon. But some little time must necessarily intervene. Our Mary must be able to walk alone, to cut her own

food, and to feed herself, and to wear her own shoes, for at present she wears mine. All things considered, my friend and brother, you will see the expediency of waiting a little before we set off to Eartham: we mean, indeed, before that day arrives, to make a trial of the strength of her head, how far it may be able to bear the motion of a carriage, a motion that it has not felt these seven years. I grieve that we are thus circumstanced, and that we cannot gratify ourselves in a delightful and innocent project without all these precautions; but when we have leaf-gold to handle, we must do it tenderly.

I thank you, my brother, both for presenting my authorship to your friend Guy, and for the excellent verses with which you have inscribed your present. There are none neater or better turned: with what shall I requite you? I have nothing to send you but a gimcrack, which I have prepared for my bride and bridegroom neighbours, who are expected to-morrow. You saw in my book a poem, entitled Catharina, and which concluded with a wish that we had her for a neighbour: this, therefore, is called

CATHARINA:

THE SECOND PART.

*On her Marriage to GEORGE COURTENAY, Esquire.*

Believe it or not, as you choose,  
 The doctrine is certainly true,  
 That the future is known to the muse,  
 And poets are oracles too.

I did but express a desire  
 To see Catharina at home,  
 At the side of my friend George's fire;  
 And lo! she is actually come.

And such prophecy some may despise;  
 But the wish of a poet and friend  
 Perhaps is approv'd in the skies,  
 And therefore attains to its end.

'Twas a wish, that flew ardently forth  
 From a bosom effectually warm'd  
 With the talents, the graces, and worth  
 Of the person for whom it was form'd.



Maria would leave us, I knew,  
 To the grief and regret of us all;  
 But less to our grief could we view  
 Catharina the queen of the hall.

And therefore, I wish'd as I did,  
 And therefore, this union of hands  
 Not a whisper was heard to forbid,  
 But all cry, Amen, to the bands.

Since, therefore, I seem to incur  
 No danger of wishing in vain,  
 When making good wishes for her,  
 I will e'en to my wishes again.

With one I have made her a wife,  
 And now I will try with another,  
 Which I cannot suppress for my life,  
 How soon I can make her a mother.

W. C.

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LETTER XXXI.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, July 4, 1792.*

I know not how you proceed in your life of Milton, but I suppose not very rapidly, for while you were herè, and since you left us, you have had no other theme but me. As for myself, except my letters to you, and the nuptial song I inserted in my last, I have literally done nothing since I saw you: nothing, I mean, in the writing way, though a great deal in another; that is to say, in attending my poor Mary, and endeavouring to nurse her up for a journey to Eartham. In this I have hitherto succeeded tolerably well, and had rather carry this point completely than be the most famous editor of Milton that the world has ever seen or shall see.

Your humorous descant upon my art of wishing made us merry, and consequently did good to us both. I sent my wish to the Hall yesterday. They are excellent neighbours, and so friendly to me that I wished to gratify them. When I went to pay my first visit, George flew into the court to meet me, and when I entered the parlour, Catharina sprang into my arms.

W. C.

## LETTER XXXII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, July 15, 1792.*

The progress of the old nurse in Terence is very much like the progress of my poor patient in the road of recovery. I cannot, indeed, say that she moves, but advances not, for advances are certainly made, but the progress of a week is hardly perceptible. I know not, therefore, at present, what to say about this long-postponed journey. The utmost that it is safe for me to say at this moment is this; you know that you are dear to us both; true it is that you are so, and equally true that the very instant we feel ourselves at liberty we will fly to Eartham. I have been but once within the Hall door since the Courteney's came home, much as I have been pressed to dine there, and have hardly escaped giving a little offence by declining it. But though I should offend all the world by my obstinacy in this instance, I would not leave my poor Mary alone. Johnny serves me as a representative, and him I send without scruple. As to the affair of Milton, I know not what will become of it. I wrote to Johnson a week since to tell him that the interruption of Mrs. Unwin's illness still continuing, and being likely to continue, I know not when I should be able to proceed. The translations, I said, were finished, except the revision of a part.

God bless your dear little boy and poet! I thank him for exercising his dawning genius upon me, and shall be still happier to thank him in person.

Abbot is painting me so true,  
That, trust me you would stare,  
And hardly know, at the first view,  
If I were here, or there.

I have sat twice; and the few who have seen his copy of me are much struck with the resemblance. He is a sober, quiet man, which, considering that I must have him at least a week longer for an inmate, is a great comfort to me.

My Mary sends you her best love. She can walk now, leaning on my arm only, and her speech is certainly much improved. I long to see you. Why cannot you and dear Tom spend the remainder of the summer with us? We might then all set off for Eartham merrily together. But I retract this, conscious that I am unreasonable. It is a wretched world, and what we would, is almost always what we cannot. Adieu. Love me, and be sure of a return.

W. C.

## LETTER XXXIII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, July 22, 1792.*

This important affair, my dear brother, is at last decided, and we are coming. Wednesday se'night, if nothing occur to make a later day necessary, is the day fixed for our journey. Our rate of travelling must depend on Mary's ability to bear it. Our mode of travelling will occupy three days unavoidably, for we shall come in a coach. Abbot finishes my picture to-morrow; on Wednesday he returns to town, and is commissioned to order one down for us, with four steeds to draw it:

—“Hollow pamper'd jades of Asia,  
“That cannot go but forty miles a day.”

Send us our route, for I am as ignorant of it almost as if I were in a strange country.—We shall reach St. Alban's, I suppose, the first day; say where we must finish our second day's journey, and at what inn we may best repose. As to the end of the third day, we know where that will find us; viz. in the arms and under the roof of our beloved Hayley.

General Cowper having heard a rumour of this intended migration, desires to meet me on the road, that we may once more see each other. He lives at Ham, near Kingston. Shall we go through Kingston, or near it? For I would give him as little trouble as possible, though he offers very kindly to come as far as Barnet for that purpose. Nor must I forget Carwardine, who so kindly desired to be informed what way we should go. On what point of the road will it be easiest for him to find us? On all these points you must be my oracle. My friend and brother, we shall overwhelm you with our numbers; this is all the trouble that I have left. My Johnny of Norfolk, happy in the thought of accompanying us, would be broken-hearted to be left behind.

In the midst of all these solitudes I laugh to think what they are made of, and what an important thing it is for me to travel. Other men steal away from their homes silently, and make no disturbance; but when I move, houses are turned upside down, maids are turned out of their beds, all the counties through which I pass appear to be in an uproar. Surry greets me by the mouth of the General, and Essex by that of Carwardine. How strange does all this seem to a man who has seen no bustle, and made none, for twenty years together!

W. C.

## LETTER XXXIV.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, July 29, 1792.*

Through floods and flames to your retreat  
 I win my desp'rate way,  
 And when we meet, if e'er we meet,  
 Will echo your huzza.

You will wonder at the word *desp'rate* in the second line, and at the *if* in the third; but could you have any conception of the fears I have had to bustle with, of the dejection of spirits that I have suffered concerning this journey, you would wonder much more that I still courageously persevere in my resolution to undertake it. Fortunately for my intentions it happens that as the day approaches my terrors abate; for had they continued to be what they were a week since, I must, after all, have disappointed you; and was actually once on the verge of doing it. I have told you something of my nocturnal experiences, and assure you now that they were hardly ever more terrific than on this occasion. Prayer has, however, opened my passage at last, and obtained for me a degree of confidence that I trust will prove a comfortable viaticum to me all the way. On Wednesday, therefore, we set forth.

The terrors that I have spoken of would appear ridiculous to most, but to you they will not, for you are a reasonable creature, and know well, that, to whatever cause it be owing, whether to constitution or to God's express appointment, I am hunted by spiritual hounds in the night-season. I cannot help it. You will pity me, and wish it were otherwise; and though you may think that there is much of the imaginary in it, will not deem it, for that reason, an evil less to be lamented. So much for fears and distresses. Soon, I hope, they shall all have a joyful termination, and I, my Mary, my Johnny, and my dog, be skipping with delight at Eartham.

Well, this picture is at last finished, and well finished, I can assure you. Every creature that has seen it has been astonished at the resemblance. Sam's boy bowed to it, and Beau walked up to it, wagging his tail as he went, and evidently showing that he acknowledged its likeness to his master. It is a half-length, as it is technically but absurdly called; that is to say, it gives all but the foot and ankle. To-morrow it goes to town, and will hang some months at Abbot's, when it will be sent to its due destination in Norfolk.

I hope, or rather wish, that at Eartham I may recover that habit of study which, inveterate as it once seemed, I now seem to

have lost—lost to such a degree, that it is even painful to me to think of what it will cost me to acquire it again.

Adieu, my dear, dear Hayley; God give us a happy meeting. Mary sends her love—she is in pretty good plight this morning, having slept well, and, for her part, has no fears at all about the journey. Ever yours,

W. C.

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The affectionate little prayer at the close of the last letter prevailed, and providence conducted these most interesting travellers very safely to my retreat. The delights that I enjoyed in promoting the health and cheerfulness of guests so dear to me; in sharing the high gratification of Cowper's society, with my old sympathetic friend Romney; and in beholding that expressive resemblance of the poet, which forms a frontispiece to this work, grow under the pencil of the friendly artist (agreeably inspired by the mental dignity of his subject); these delights are indeed treasured in my memory, among those prime blessings of mortal existence which still call for our gratitude to heaven, even when they are departed; for even then they still afford us that sweet secondary life which we form to ourselves, from the pleasing contemplation of past hours very happily employed.

It is, however, unnecessary for me to dwell on the memorable period that Cowper passed under my roof, because a few of his letters, written to different friends while he was with me, will sufficiently describe the beneficial effect which the beautiful scenery of Sussex very visibly produced on his health and spirits. I fear not the imputation of vanity for inserting the vivid praise of my friend on the spot I inhabited, for I now inhabit it no more; and if I ever had any such vanity, it must have perished with the darling child for whom I wished to embellish and preserve the scene that Cowper has so highly commended.

The tender partiality which this most feeling friend had conceived for me rendered him not a little partial to whatever engaged his thoughts as mine. Many endearing marks of such partiality occurred during his residence at Eartham; but the one which gratified me most I cannot forbear to mention. I mean the very sweet condescension with which he admitted to his friendship and confidence the child to whom I have alluded, at that time a boy of eleven years, whose rare early talents, and rarer modesty, endeared him so much to Cowper, that he allowed and invited him to criticise his Homer. The good-natured reader will forgive me, if he happens to find a brief specimen of such juvenile criticism in their future correspondence.



Homer was not the immediate object of our attention, while Cowper resided at Earham. The morning hours that we could bestow upon books were chiefly devoted to a complete revisal and correction of all the translations which my friend had finished from the Latin and Italian poetry of Milton; and it was generally our pastime after dinner to amuse ourselves in executing a rapid metrical version of Andreini's *Adamo*. But the constant care which the delicate health of Mrs. Unwin required, rendered it impossible for us to be very assiduous in study, and perhaps the best of all studies was, to promote and share that most singular and most exemplary tenderness of attention, with which Cowper incessantly laboured to counteract every infirmity, bodily and mental, with which sickness and age had conspired to load this interesting guardian of his afflicted life.

I have myself no language sufficiently strong, or sufficiently tender, to express my just admiration of that angelic, compassionate sensibility, with which Cowper incessantly watched over his aged invalid; but my reader will yet be enabled to form an adequate idea of that sensibility by a copy of his verses, to which it gave rise, when these infirmities grew still more striking, on her return to Weston.

The air of the south infused a little portion of fresh strength into her shattered frame, and to give it all possible efficacy, the boy, whom I have mentioned, and a young associate and fellow student of his, employed themselves regularly twice a day, in drawing this venerable cripple, in a commodious garden-chair, round the airy hill of Earham. To Cowper, and to me, it was a very pleasing spectacle, to see the benevolent vivacity of blooming youth thus continually labouring for the ease, health, and amusement of disabled age. But of this interesting time I will speak no more, since I have a better record of it to present to my reader in the following letters.

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#### LETTER XXXV.

To the Reverend Mr. GREATHEED.

*Earham, August 6, 1792.*

MY DEAR SIR,

Having first thanked you for your affectionate and acceptable letter, I will proceed, as well as I can, to answer your equally affectionate request, that I would send you early news of our arrival at Earham. Here we are, in the most elegant mansion that I have ever inhabited, and surrounded by the most delightful pleasure-grounds that I have ever seen; but

which, dissipated as my powers of thought are at present, I will not undertake to describe. It shall suffice me to say, that they occupy three sides of a hill, which, in Buckinghamshire, might well pass for a mountain, and from the summit of which is beheld a most magnificent landscape, bounded by the sea, and in one part of it by the Isle of Wight, which may also be seen plainly from the window of the library, in which I am writing.

It pleased God to carry us both through the journey with far less difficulty and inconvenience than I expected. I began it, indeed, with a thousand fears, and when we arrived the first evening at Barnet, found myself oppressed in spirit to a degree that could hardly be exceeded. I saw Mrs. Unwin weary, as she might well be, and heard such a variety of noises, both within the house and without, that I concluded she would get no rest. But I was mercifully disappointed. She rested, though not well, yet sufficiently; and when we finished our next day's journey at Ripley, we were both in better condition, both of body and mind, than on the day preceding. At Ripley we found a quiet inn, that housed, as it happened, that night no company but ourselves. There we slept well, and rose perfectly refreshed; and, except some terrors that I felt at passing over the Sussex hills by moon-light, met with little to complain of, till we arrived, about ten o'clock, at Eartham. Here we are as happy as it is in the power of terrestrial good to make us. It is almost a paradise in which we dwell; and our reception has been the kindest that it was possible for friendship and hospitality to contrive. Our host mentions you with great respect, and bids me tell you that he esteems you highly. Mrs. Unwin, who is, I think, in some points, already the better for her excursion, unites with mine her best compliments, both to yourself and Mrs. Greathead. I have much to see and enjoy before I can be perfectly apprized of all the delights of Eartham, and will therefore now subscribe myself yours, my dear Sir, with great sincerity,

W. C.

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LETTER XXXVI.

To Mrs. COURTENEY.

*Eartham, August 12, 1792.*

MY DEAREST CATHARINA,

Though I have travelled far, nothing did I see in my travels that surprised me half so agreeably as your kind letter; for high as my opinion is of your good-nature, I had no hopes of hearing from you till I should have written first—a pleasure which I intended to allow myself the first opportunity.

After three days confinement in a coach, and suffering as we went all that could be suffered from excessive heat and dust, we found ourselves late in the evening at the door of our friend Hayley. In every other respect the journey was extremely pleasant. At the Mitre, in Barnet, where we lodged the first evening, we found our friend Mr. Rose, who had walked thither from his house in Chancery Lane to meet us; and at Kingston, where we dined the second day, I found my old and much valued friend, General Cowper, whom I had not seen in thirty years, and but for this journey should never have seen again. Mrs. Unwin, on whose account I had a thousand fears before we set out, suffered as little from fatigue as myself, and begins, I hope, already to feel some beneficial effects from the air of Eartham, and the exercise that she takes in one of the most delightful pleasure-grounds in the world. They occupy three sides of a hill, lofty enough to command a view of the sea, which skirts the horizon to a length of many miles, with the Isle of Wight at the end of it. The inland scene is equally beautiful, consisting of a large and deep valley well cultivated, and inclosed by magnificent hills, all crowned with wood. I had, for my part, no conception that a poet could be the owner of such a paradise; and his house is as elegant as his scenes are charming.

But think not, my dear Catharina, that amidst all these beauties I shall lose the remembrance of the peaceful, but less splendid, Weston. Your precincts will be as dear to me as ever, when I return; though when that day will arrive I know not, our host being determined, as I plainly see, to keep us as long as possible. Give my best love to your husband. Thank him most kindly for his attention to the old Bard of Greece, and pardon me that I do not send you now an epitaph for Fop. I am not sufficiently recollected to compose even a bagatelle at present; but in due time you shall receive it.

Hayley, who will some time or other, I hope, see you at Weston, is already prepared to love you both, and being passionately fond of music, longs much to hear you.

W. C.

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LETTER XXXVII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*Eartham, August 14, 1792.*

Romney is here. It would add much to my happiness if you were of the party. I have prepared Hayley to think highly, that is, justly of you, and the time I hope will come when you will supersede all need of my recommendation.

Mrs. Unwin gathers strength. I have indeed great hopes, from the air and exercise which this fine season affords her opportunity to use, that ere we return she will be herself again.

W. C.

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LETTER XXXVIII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*Eartham, August 18, 1792.*

Wishes in this world are generally vain, and in the next we shall make none. Every day I wish you were of our party, knowing how happy you would be in a place where we have nothing to do but enjoy beautiful scenery, and converse agreeably.

Mrs. Unwin's health continues to improve; and even I, who was well when I came, find myself still better. Adieu.

W. C.

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LETTER XXXIX.

To Mrs. COURTENAY.

*Eartham, August 25, 1792.*

Without waiting for an answer to my last, I send my dear Catharina the epitaph she desired, composed, as well as I could compose it, in a place where every object, being still new to me, distracts my attention, and makes me as awkward at verse as if I had never dealt in it. Here it is.

EPITAPH ON FOP:

*A Dog belonging to Lady THROCKMORTON.*

Though once a puppy, and though Fop by name,  
 Here moulders one, whose bones some honour claim;  
 No sycophant, although of spaniel race!  
 And though no hound, a martyr to the chace!  
 Ye squirrels, rabbits, leverets, rejoice!  
 Your haunts no longer echo to his voice.  
 This record of his fate exulting view:  
 He died, worn out with vain pursuit of you.

“Yes!” the indignant shade of Fop replies,  
 “And, worn with vain pursuit, Man also dies.”



I am here, as I told you in my last, delightfully situated, and in the enjoyment of all that the most friendly hospitality can impart; yet do I neither forget Weston, nor my friends at Weston: on the contrary, I have, at length, though much and kindly pressed to make a longer stay, determined on the day of our departure. On the seventeenth day of September we shall leave Eartham. Four days will be necessary to bring us home again; for I am under a promise to General Cowper to dine with him on the way, which cannot be done comfortably, either to him or to ourselves, unless we sleep that night at Kingston.

The air of this place has been, I believe, beneficial to us both: I indeed was in tolerable health before I set out, but have acquired, since I came, both a better appetite, and a knack of sleeping almost as much in a single night as formerly in two. Whether double quantities of that article will be favourable to me as a poet, time must show. About myself, however, I care little, being made of materials so tough as not to threaten me even now, at the end of so many *lustrums*, with any thing like a speedy dissolution. My chief concern has been about Mrs. Unwin, and my chief comfort at this moment is, that she likewise has received, I hope, considerable benefit by the journey.

Tell my dear George that I begin to long to behold him again, and did it not savour of ingratitude to the friend under whose roof I am so happy at present, should be impatient to find myself once more under yours.

Adieu, my dear Catharina. I have nothing to add in the way of news, except that Romney has drawn me in crayons, by the suffrage of all here, extremely like.

W. C.

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LETTER XL.

To the Reverend Mr. HURDIS.

*Eartham, August 26, 1792.*

MY DEAR SIR,

Your kind but very affecting letter found me not at Weston, to which place it was directed, but in a bower of my friend Hayley's garden, at Eartham, where I was sitting with Mrs. Unwin. We both knew, the moment we saw it, from whom it came, and observing a red seal, both comforted ourselves that all was well at Burwash; but we soon felt that we were called not to rejoice, but to mourn with you: we do indeed sincerely mourn with you; and if it will afford you any consolation to know it, you may be assured that every eye here has testified what our



hearts have suffered for you. Your loss is great, and your disposition, I perceive, such as exposes you to feel the whole weight of it. I will not add to your sorrow, by a vain attempt to assuage it: your own good sense, and the piety of your principles, will, of course, suggest to you the most powerful motives of acquiescence in the will of God. You will be sure to recollect that the stroke, severe as it is, is not the stroke of an enemy, but of a father; and will find, I trust, hereafter, that, like a father, he has done you good by it. Thousands have been able to say, and myself as loud as any of them, it has been good for me that I was afflicted; but time is necessary to work us to this persuasion, and in due time it shall be yours. Mr. Hayley, who tenderly sympathises with you, has enjoined me to send you as pressing an invitation as I can frame, to join me at this place. I have every motive to wish your consent; both your benefit and my own, which, I believe, would be abundantly answered by your coming, ought to make me eloquent in such a cause. Here you will find silence and retirement in perfection, when you would seek them, and here such company as, I have no doubt, would suit you; all cheerful, but not noisy; and all alike disposed to love you. You and I seem to have here a fair opportunity of meeting. It were a pity we should be in the same county and not come together. I am here till the seventeenth of September, an interval that will afford you time to make the necessary arrangements, and to gratify me at last with an interview, which I have long desired. Let me hear from you soon, that I may have double pleasure, the pleasure of expecting, as well as that of seeing you.

Mrs. Unwin, I thank God, though still a sufferer by her last illness, is much better, and has received considerable benefit by the air of Eartham. She adds to mine her affectionate compliments, and joins me and Hayley in this invitation.

Mr. Romney is here, and a young man a cousin of mine. I tell you who we are, that you may not be afraid of us.

Adieu—May the Comforter of all the afflicted who seek him be yours. God bless you.

W. C.

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LETTER XLI.

To Lady HESKETH.

*Eartham, August 26, 1792.*

I know not how it is, my dearest coz. but in a new scene, and surrounded by strange objects, I find my powers of thinking dissipated to a degree that makes it difficult to

me even to write a letter, and even a letter to you; but such a letter as I can, I will, and have the fairest chance to succeed this morning; Hayley, and Romney, and Hayley's son, and Beau, being all gone together to the sea for bathing. The sea, you must know, is nine miles off; so that unless stupidity prevent, I shall have opportunity to write not only to you, but to poor Hurdis also, who is broken-hearted for the loss of his favourite sister, lately dead; and whose letter, giving an account of it, which I received yesterday, drew tears from the eyes of all our party. My only comfort respecting even yourself is, that you write in good spirits, and assure me that you are in a state of recovery; otherwise I should mourn not only for Hurdis, but for myself, lest a certain event should reduce me, and in a short time too, to a situation as distressing as his; for though nature designed you only for my cousin, you have had a sister's place in my affections ever since I knew you. The reason is, I suppose, that having no sister, the daughter of my own mother, I thought it proper to have one, the daughter of yours. Certain it is that I can by no means afford to lose you, and that unless you will be upon honour with me, to give me always a true account of yourself, at least when we are not together, I shall always be unhappy, because always suspicious that you deceive me.

Now for ourselves. I am, without the least dissimulation, in good health; my spirits are about as good as you have ever seen them; and if increase of appetite, and a double portion of sleep, be advantageous, such are the advantages that I have received from this migration. As to that gloominess of mind which I have had these twenty years, it cleaves to me even here, and could I be translated to paradise, unless I left my body behind me, would cleave to me even there also. It is my companion for life, and nothing will ever divorce us. So much for myself. Mrs. Unwin is evidently the better for her jaunt, though by no means as she was before this last attack; still wanting help when she would rise from her seat, and a support in walking: but she is able to use more exercise than she could at home, and moves with rather a less tottering step. God knows what he designs for me, but when I see those who are dearer to me than myself distempered and enfeebled, and myself as strong as in the days of my youth, I tremble for the solitude in which a few years may place me. I wish her and you to die before me, indeed, but not till I am more likely to follow immediately. Enough of this.

Romney has drawn me in crayons, and in the opinion of all here, with his best hand, and with the most exact resemblance possible.

The seventeenth of September is the day on which I intend to leave Eartham. We shall then have been six weeks resident here; a holiday time long enough for a man who has much to do. And now farewell.

W. C.

*P. S.* Hayley, whose love for me seems to be truly that of a brother, has given me his picture, drawn by Romney about fifteen years ago; an admirable likeness.

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LETTER XLII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*Eartham, Sept. 9, 1792.*

MY DEAREST COZ.

I determine, if possible, to send you one more letter, or, at least, something like one, before we leave Eartham. But I am, in truth, so unaccountably local in the use of my pen, that, like the man in the fable, who could leap well no where but at Rhodes, I seem incapable of writing at all, except at Weston. This is, as I have already told you, a delightful place; more beautiful scenery I have never beheld, nor expect to behold; but the charms of it, uncommon as they are, have not in the least alienated my affections from Weston. The genius of that place suits me better; it has an air of snug concealment, in which a disposition like mine feels itself peculiarly gratified: whereas, here I see from every window woods like forests, and hills like mountains, a wildness, in short, that rather increases my natural melancholy, and which, were it not for the agreeables I find within, would soon convince me that mere change of place can avail me little. Accordingly, I have not looked out for a house in Sussex, nor shall.

The intended day of our departure continues to be the seventeenth. I hope to re-conduct Mrs. Unwin to the Lodge with her health considerably mended; but it is in the article of speech chiefly, and in her powers of walking, that she is sensible of much improvement. Her sight and her hand still fail her, so that she can neither read nor work: mortifying circumstances both, to her, who is never willingly idle.

On the eighteenth I propose to dine with the General, and to rest that night at Kingston. But the pleasure I shall have in the interview will hardly be greater than the pain I shall feel at the end of it, for we shall part probably to meet no more.

Johnny, I know, has told you that Mr. Hurdis is here. Distressed by the loss of his sister, he has renounced the place where

she died for ever, and is about to enter on a new course of life at Oxford. You would admire him much. He is gentle in his manners, and delicate in his person, resembling our poor friend Unwin, both in face and figure, more than any one I have ever seen. But he has not, at least he has not at present, his vivacity.

I have corresponded since I came here with Mrs. Courteney, and had yesterday a very kind letter from her.

Adieu, my dear; may God bless you. Write to me as soon as you can after the twentieth; I shall then be at Weston, and indulging myself in the hope that I shall ere long see you there also.

W. C.

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The reader will perceive from the last letter, that Cowper, amused as he was with the scenery of Sussex, began to feel the powerful attraction of home. Indeed, the infirm state of Mrs. Unwin, and the declining season of the year, rendered it highly desirable for the tender travellers to be restored to their own fire-side by the time they proposed.

Their departure from Eartham was a scene of affectionate anxiety; and a perfect contrast to the gaiety of their arrival. The kindness of Cowper relieved my solicitude concerning their journey, by the following letter from Kingston. I insert it as a pleasing memorial of that peculiar tenderness of heart, which conspired with his most admirable talents to render him the most interesting of men. From an ardent, and, I hope, a laudable desire to display this endearing characteristic of my friend, I shall add a collection of extracts from his letters to me, rather more copious than I at first intended.

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#### LETTER XLIII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*The Sun, at Kingston, Sept. 18, 1792.*

MY DEAR BROTHER,

With no sinister accident to retard or terrify us, we find ourselves, at a quarter before one, arrived safe at Kingston. I left you with a heavy heart, and with a heavy heart took leave of our dear Tom, at the bottom of the Chalk-hill. But soon after this last separation, my troubles gushed from my eyes, and then I was better.

We must now prepare for our visit to the General. I add no more, therefore, than our dearest remembrances and prayers that God may bless you and yours, and reward you an hundred-fold



for all your kindness. Tell Tom I shall always hold him dear for his affectionate attentions to Mrs. Unwin. From her heart the memory of him can never be erased. Johnny loves you all, and has his share in all these acknowledgments. Adieu.

W. C.

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LETTER XLIV.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, Sept. 21, 1792.*

MY DEAR HAYLEY,

Chaos himself, even the chaos of Milton, is not surrounded with more confusion, nor has a mind more completely in a hubbub than I experience at the present moment. At our first arrival, after a long absence, we find a hundred orders to servants necessary, a thousand things to be restored to their proper places, and an endless variety of minutiae to be adjusted; which, though individually of little importance, are most momentous in the aggregate. In these circumstances I find myself so indisposed to writing, that, save to yourself, I would on no account attempt it; but to you I will give such a recital as I can, of all that has passed since I sent you that short note from Kingston; knowing that if it be a perplexed recital, you will consider the cause, and pardon it. I will begin with a remark, in which I am inclined to think you will agree with me, that there is sometimes more true heroism passing in a corner, and on occasions that make no noise in the world, than has often been exercised by those whom that world esteems her greatest heroes, and on occasions the most illustrious; I hope so at least, for all the heroism I have to boast, and all the opportunities I have of displaying any, are of a private nature. After writing the note I immediately began to prepare for my appointed visit to Ham; but the struggles that I had with my own spirit, labouring as I did under the most dreadful dejection, are never to be told. I would have given the world to have been excused. I went, however, and carried my point against myself with a heart riven asunder. I have reasons for all this anxiety, which I cannot relate now. The visit, however, passed off well, and we returned in the dark to Kingston. I, with a lighter heart than I had known since my departure from Fartham, and Mary too, for she had suffered hardly less than myself, and chiefly on my account. That night we rested well in our inn, and at twenty minutes after eight next morning set off for London; exactly at ten we reached Mr. Rose's door: we drank a dish of chocolate with him, and proceeded, Mr. Rose riding with us as



far as St. Alban's. From this time we met with no impediment. In the dark, and in a storm, at eight at night we found ourselves at our own back door. Mrs. Unwin was very near slipping out of the chair in which she was taken from the chaise, but at last was landed safe. We all have had a good night, and are all well this morning. God bless you my dearest brother.

W. C.

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LETTER XLV.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, Oct. 2, 1792.*

MY DEAR HAYLEY,

A bad night, succeeded by an east wind, and a sky all in sables, have such an effect on my spirits, that, if I did not consult my own comfort more than yours, I should not write to-day, for I shall not entertain you much. Yet your letter, though containing no very pleasant tidings, has afforded me some relief. It tells me, indeed, that you have been dispirited yourself, and that poor little Tom, the faithful squire of my Mary, has been seriously indisposed. All this grieves me; but then there is a warmth of heart and a kindness in it that do me good. I will endeavour not to repay you in notes of sorrow and despondence, though all my sprightly chords seem broken. In truth, one day excepted, I have not seen the day when I have been cheerful since I left you. My spirits, I think, are almost constantly lower than they were: the approach of winter is, perhaps, the cause, and if it is, I have nothing better to expect for a long time to come.

Yesterday was a day of assignation with myself, the day of which I said some days before it came, when that day comes I will begin my dissertations. Accordingly, when it came I prepared to do so; filled a letter-case with fresh paper, furnished myself with a pretty good pen, and replenished my ink-bottle; but partly from one cause, and partly from another, chiefly, however, from distress and dejection, after writing and obliterating about six lines, in the composition of which I spent near an hour, I was obliged to relinquish the attempt. An attempt so unsuccessful could have no other effect than to dishearten me, and it has had that effect to such a degree, that I know not when I shall find courage to make another. At present I shall certainly abstain, since, at present, I cannot well afford to expose myself to the danger of a fresh mortification.

W. C.

## LETTER XLVI.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, Oct. 13, 1792.*

I began a letter to you yesterday, my dearest brother, and proceeded through two sides of the sheet; but so much of my nervous fever found its way into it, that, looking it over this morning, I determined not to send it.

I have risen, though not in good spirits, yet in better than I generally do of late, and therefore will not address you in the melancholy tone that belongs to my worst feelings.

I began to be restless about your portrait, and to say, how long shall I have to wait for it? I wished it here for many reasons: the sight of it will be a comfort to me, for I not only love, but am proud of you, as of a conquest made in my old age. Johnny goes to town on Monday, on purpose to call on Romney, to whom he shall give all proper information concerning its conveyance hither. The name of a man whom I esteem as I do Romney, ought not to be unmusical in my ears, but his name will be so till I shall have paid him a debt justly due to him, by doing such poetical honours to it as I intend. Heaven knows when that intention will be executed, for the muse is still as obdurate and as coy as ever.

Your kind postscript is just arrived, and gives me great pleasure. When I cannot see you myself, it seems some comfort, however, that you have been seen by another known to me, and who will tell me, in a few days, that he has seen you. Your wishes to disperse my melancholy would, I am sure, prevail, did that event depend on the warmth and sincerity with which you frame them; but it has baffled both wishes and prayers, and those the most fervent that could be made, so many years, that the case seems hopeless. But no more of this at present.

Your verses to Austin are as sweet as the honey that they accompany; kind, friendly, witty, and elegant: when shall I be able to do the like! Perhaps when my Mary, like your little Tom, shall cease to be an invalid, I may recover a power, at least, to do something. I sincerely rejoice in the dear little man's restoration. My Mary continues, I hope, to mend a little.

W. C.

## LETTER XLVII.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

*Weston, Oct. 19, 1792.*

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

You are too useful when you are here not to be missed on a hundred occasions daily, and too much domesticated with us not to be regretted always. I hope, therefore, that your month or six weeks will not be like many that I have known, capable of being drawn out into any length whatever, and productive of nothing but disappointment.

I have done nothing since you went, except that I have composed the better half of a sonnet to Romney; yet even this ought to bear an earlier date, for I began to be haunted with a desire to do it long before we came out of Sussex, and have daily attempted it ever since.

It would be well for the reading part of the world, if the writing part were, many of them, as dull as I am. Yet even this small produce, which my sterile intellect has hardly yielded at last, may serve to convince you that in point of spirits I am not worse. In fact, I am a little better. The powders and the laudanum together have, for the present at least, abated the fever that consumes them; and in measure as the fever abates, I acquire a less discouraging view of things, and with it a little power to exert myself.

In the evenings I read Baker's Chronicle to Mrs. Unwin, having no other history, and hope in time to be as well versed in it, as his admirer Sir Roger de Coverly.

W. C.

## LETTER XLVIII.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

*Weston, Oct. 22, 1792.*

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

Here am I with I know now not how many letters to answer, and no time to do it in. I exhort you, therefore, to set a proper value on this, as proving your priority in my attentions, though, in other respects, likely to be of little value.

You do well to sit for your picture, and give very sufficient reasons for doing it. You will also, I doubt not, take care that when future generations shall look at it, some spectator or other shall say, this is the picture of a good man, and a useful one.

And now God bless you, my dear Johnny. I proceed pretty much at the old rate; rising cheerless and distressed in the morning, and brightening a little as the day goes on. Adieu.

W. C.

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LETTER XLIX.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, October 28, 1792.*

Nothing done, my dearest brother, nor likely to be done at present; yet I purpose, in a day or two, to make another attempt, to which, however, I shall address myself with fear and trembling, like a man who, having sprained his wrist, dreads to use it. I have not, indeed, like such a man, injured myself by any extraordinary exertion, but seem as much enfeebled as if I had. The consciousness that there is so much to do, and nothing done, is a burthen that I am not able to bear. Milton, especially, is my grievance, and I might almost as well be haunted by his ghost, as goaded with such continual reproaches for neglecting him: I will therefore begin; I will do my best; and if, after all, that best prove good for nothing, I will even send the notes, worthless as they are, that I have made already; a measure very disagreeable to myself, and to which nothing but necessity shall compel me. I shall rejoice to see those new samples of your biography which you give me to expect.

Allons! courage!—Here comes something, however; produced after a gestation as long as that of a pregnant woman. It is the debt long unpaid; the compliment due to Romney; and if it has your approbation, I will send it, or you may send it for me. I must premise, however, that I intended nothing less than a sonnet when I began. I know not why, but I said to myself, it shall not be a sonnet: accordingly I attempted it in one sort of measure, then in a second, then in a third, till I had made the trial in half a dozen different kinds of shorter verse, and behold it is a sonnet at last. The fates would have it so.

To GEORGE ROMNEY, Esquire.

Romney! expert infallible to trace,  
 On chart or canvass, not the form alone,  
 And 'semblance, but, however faintly shown,  
 The mind's impression too on every face:

With strokes that time ought never to erase,  
 Thou hast so pencil'd mine, that though I own  
 The subject worthless, I have never known  
 The artist shining with superior grace.

But this I mark, that symptoms none of woe  
 In thy incomparable work appear :  
 Well, I am satisfied it should be so,  
 Since, on maturer thought, the cause is clear ;

For in my looks, what sorrow could'st thou see,  
 While I was Hayley's guest, and sat to thee ?

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LETTER L.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

*Weston, Nov. 9, 1792.*

I wish that I were as industrious, and as much occupied as you, though in a different way ; but it is not so with me. Mrs. Unwin's great debility (who is not yet able to move without assistance) is of itself a hinderance such as would effectually disable me. Till she can work and read, and fill up her time as usual, (all which is at present entirely out of her power) I may now and then find time to write a letter, but I shall write nothing more. I cannot sit with my pen in my hand, and my books before me, while she is, in effect, in solitude, silent and looking at the fire. To this hinderance that other has been added, of which you are already aware, a want of spirits, such I have never known, when I was not absolutely laid by, since I commenced an author. How long I shall be continued in these uncomfortable circumstances is known only to Him, who, as he will, disposes of us all. I may yet be able, perhaps, to prepare the first book of the *Paradise Lost* for the press before it will be wanted ; and Johnson himself seems to think there will be no haste for the second. But poetry is my favourite employment, and all my poetical operations are, in the mean time, suspended ; for while a work to which I have bound myself remains unaccomplished, I can do nothing else.

Johnson's plan of prefixing my *pliz* to the new edition of my poems is by no means a pleasant one to me ; and so I told him in a letter I sent him from *Eartham*, in which I assured him that my objections to it would not be easily surmounted. But if you judge that it may really have an effect in advancing the sale, I would not be so squeamish as to suffer the spirit of prudery to prevail in me to his disadvantage. Somebody told an author, I forget whom,



that there was more vanity in refusing his picture than in granting it, on which he instantly complied. I do not perfectly feel all the force of the argument, but it shall content me that he did.

I do most sincerely rejoice in the success of your publication, and have no doubt that my prophecy concerning your success in greater matters will be fulfilled. We are naturally pleased when our friends approve what we approve ourselves; how much then must I be pleased when you speak so kindly of Johnny! I know him to be all that you think him, and love him entirely.

Adieu. We expect you at Christmas, and shall therefore rejoice when Christmas comes. Let nothing interfere.

Ever yours,

W. C.

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### LETTER LI.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

Weston, Nov. 20, 1792.

I give you many thanks for your rhymes, and for your verses without rhyme; for your poetical dialogue between wood and stone; between Homer's head and the head of Samuel; kindly intended, I know well, for my amusement, and that amused me much.

The successor of the clerk defunct, for whom I used to write mortuary verses, arrived here this morning, with a recommendatory letter from Joe Rye, and an humble petition of his own, intreating me to assist him as I had assisted his predecessor. I have undertaken the service, although with no little reluctance, being involved in many arrears on other subjects, and having very little dependance at present on my ability to write at all. I proceed exactly as when you were here—a letter now and then before breakfast, and the rest of my time all holiday; if holiday it may be called, that is spent chiefly in moping and musing, and “*forecasting the fashion of uncertain evils.*”

The fever on my spirits has harrassed me much, and I have never had so good a night nor so quiet a rising, since you went, as on this very morning—a relief that I account particularly seasonable and propitious; because I had, in my intentions, devoted this morning to you, and could not have fulfilled those intentions had I been as spiritless as I generally am.

I am glad that Johnson is in no haste for Milton, for I seem myself not likely to address myself presently to that concern, with any prospect of success; yet something now and then, like a secret whisper, encourages and assures me that it will yet be done.

W. C.

## LETTER LII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, Nov. 22, 1792.*

How shall I thank you enough for the interest you take in my future Miltonic labours, and the assistance you promise me in the performance of them? I will some time or other, if I live, and live a poet, acknowledge your friendship in some of my best verse; the most suitable return one poet can make to another: in the mean time I love you, and am sensible of all your kindness. You wish me warm in my work, and I ardently wish the same; but when I shall be so, God only knows. My melancholy, which seemed a little alleviated for a few days, has gathered about me again, with as black a cloud as ever: the consequence is absolute incapacity to begin.

I was for some years Dirge-writer to the town of Northampton, being employed by the clerk of the principal parish there to furnish him with an annual copy of verses proper to be printed at the foot of his bill of mortality. But the clerk died, and hearing nothing for two years from his successor, I well hoped that I was out of my office. The other morning, however, Sam announced the new clerk: he came to solicit the same service as I had rendered to his predecessor, and I reluctantly complied; doubtful, indeed, whether I was capable. I have, however, achieved that labour, and I have done nothing more.—I am just sent for up to Mary, dear Mary! Adieu. She is as well as when I left you—I would I could say better. Remember us both affectionately to your sweet boy, and trust me for being most truly yours,

W. C.

## LETTER LIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

*Weston, Dec. 16, 1792.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We differ so little that it is pity we should not agree. The possibility of restoring our diseased Government is, I think, the only point on which we are not of one mind. If you are right, and it cannot be touched in the medical way without danger of absolute ruin to the Constitution, keep the Doctors at a distance, say I—and let us live as long as we can. But perhaps physicians might be found of skill sufficient for the purpose, were they but as willing as able. Who are they? Not those honest blunderers the mob, but our governors themselves.

As it is in the power of any individual to be honest if he will, any body of men are, as it seems to me, equally possessed of the same option. For I can never persuade myself to think the world so constituted by the Author of it, and human society, which is his ordinance, so shabby a business, that the buying and selling of votes and consciences should be essential to its existence. As to multiplied representation, I know not that I foresee any great advantage likely to arise from that. Provided there be but a reasonable number of reasonable heads laid together for the good of the nation, the end may as well be answered by five hundred as it would be by a thousand, and perhaps better. But then they should be honest as well as wise; and in order that they may be so, they should put it out of their own power to be otherwise. This they might certainly do if they would, and would they do it, I am not convinced that any great mischief would ensue. You say, "somebody must have influence;" but I see no necessity for it. Let integrity of intention and a due share of ability be supposed, and the influence will be in its right place; it will all center in the zeal and good of the nation. That will influence their debates and decisions, and nothing else ought to do it. You will say, perhaps, that wise men, and honest men, as they are supposed, are yet liable to be split into almost as many differences of opinion as there are individuals; but I rather think not. It is observed of Prince Eugene and the Duke of Marlborough, that each always approved and seconded the plans and views of the other; and the reason given for it is, that they were men of equal ability. The same cause that could make two unanimous would make twenty so, and would at least secure a majority among as many hundreds.

As to the reformation of the church, I want none, unless by a better provision for the inferior clergy; and if that could be brought about by emaciating a little some of our too corpulent dignitaries, I should be well contented.

The dissenters, I think, catholics and others, have all a right to the privileges of all other Englishmen, because to deprive them is persecution, and persecution on any account, but especially on a religious one, is an abomination. But, after all, *Valcat Respublica*; I love my country, I love my king, and I wish peace and prosperity to Old England. Adieu.

W. C.

## LETTER LIV.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, Dec. 26, 1792.*

That I may not be silent till my silence alarms you, I snatch a moment to tell you that, although *toujours triste*, I am not worse than usual; but my opportunities of writing are *sacrificed*, as perhaps Dr. Johnson would have dared to say, and the few that I have are shortened by company.

Give my love to dear Tom, and thank him for his very apposite extract, which I should be happy, indeed, to turn to any account. How often do I wish, in the course of every day, that I could be employed once more in poetry; and how often, of course, that this Miltonic trap had never caught me! The year ninety-two shall stand chronicled in my remembrance as the most melancholy that I have ever known, except the weeks that I spent at Earham; and such it has been principally, because being engaged to Milton, I felt myself no longer free for any other engagement. That ill-fated work, impracticable in itself, has made every thing else impracticable.

\* \* \* \* I am very Pindaric, and obliged to be so by the hurry of the hour. My friends are come down to breakfast. Adieu. W. C.

## LETTER LV.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, Jan. 20, 1793.*

MY DEAREST BROTHER,

Now I know that you are safe, I treat you, as you see, with a philosophical indifference, not acknowledging your kind and immediate answer to anxious inquiries, till it suits my own convenience. I have learned, however, from my late solicitude, that not only you, but yours, interest me to a degree that, should any thing happen to either of you, would be very inconsistent with my peace. Sometimes I thought that you were extremely ill, and once or twice that you were dead. As often some tragedy reached my ear concerning little Tom. "*Oh vana mentes hominum!*" How liable are we to a thousand impositions, and how indebted to honest old Time, who never fails to undeceive us! Whatever you had in prospect, you acted kindly by me not to make me partaker of your expectations; for I have a spirit, if not so sanguine as yours, yet that would have waited for your coming with anxious impatience, and have been dismally mortified by the

disappointment. Had you come, and come without notice too, you would not have surprised us more than (as the matter was managed) we were surprised at the arrival of your picture. It reached us in the evening, after the shutters were closed, at a time when a chaise might actually have brought you without giving us the least previous intimation. Then it was that Samuel, with his cheerful countenance, appeared at the study door, and with a voice as cheerful as his looks, exclaimed, "Mr. Hayley is come, Madam!" We both started, and in the same moment cried, "Mr. Hayley come! And where is he?" The next moment corrected our mistake, and finding Mary's voice grow suddenly tremulous, I turned, and saw her weeping.

I do nothing, notwithstanding all your exhortations: my idleness is proof against them all, or, to speak more truly, my difficulties are so. Something indeed I do. I play at push-pin with Homer every morning before breakfast, fingering and polishing, as Paris did his armour. I have lately had a letter from Dublin on that subject, which has pleased me.

W. C.

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LETTER LVI.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, Jan. 29, 1793.*

MY DEAREST HAYLEY,

I truly sympathize with you under your weight of sorrow for the loss of our good Samaritan. But be not broken-hearted, my friend! Remember, the loss of those we love is the condition on which we live ourselves; and that he who chooses his friends wisely from among the excellent of the earth, has a sure ground to hope, concerning them, when they die, that a merciful God has made them far happier than they could be here; and that we shall join them soon again. This is solid comfort, could we but avail ourselves of it; but I confess the difficulty of doing so. Sorrow is like the deaf adder, "that hears not the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely;" and I feel so much myself for the death of Austin, that my own chief consolation is, that I had never seen him. Live yourself, I beseech you, for I have seen so much of you, that I can by no means spare you; and I will live as long as it shall please God to permit me: I know you set some value on me, therefore let that promise comfort you; and give us not reason to say, like David's servants,—“We know that it would have pleased thee more if all we had died, than this one, for whom thou art inconsolable.” You have still Romney, and Carwardine, and Guy, and me, my poor Mary, and I know not



how many beside; as many, I suppose, as ever had an opportunity of spending a day with you. He who has the most friends must necessarily lose the most, and he whose friends are numerous as yours, may the better spare a part of them. It is a changing, transient scene: yet a little while, and this poor dream of life will be over with all of us. The living, and they who live unhappy—they are indeed subjects of sorrow. Adieu, my beloved friend. Ever yours.

W. C.

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LETTER LVII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*Weston, Feb. 5, 1793.*

In this last revisal of my work (the Homer) I have made a number of small improvements, and am now more convinced than ever, having exercised a cooler judgment upon it than before I could, that the translation will make its way. There must be time for the conquest of vehement and long-rooted prejudice; but without much self-partiality, I believe that the conquest will be made, and am certain that I should be of the same opinion, were the work another man's. I shall soon have finished the *Odyssey*, and when I have, will send the corrected copy of both to Johnson. Adieu.

W. C.

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LETTER LVIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*Weston, Feb. 10, 1793.*

My pens are all split, and my ink-glass is dry;  
Neither wit, common sense, nor ideas have I.

In vain has it been that I have made several attempts to write since I left Sussex: unless more comfortable days arrive than I have the confidence to look for, there is an end of all writing with me. I have no spirits. When the Rose came, I was obliged to prepare for his coming by a nightly dose of laudanum—twelve drops suffice; but without them I am devoured by melancholy.

Apropos of the Rose! His wife, in her political notions, is the exact counterpart of yourself—loyal in the extreme. Therefore, if you find her thus inclined, when you become acquainted with her, you must not place her resemblance of yourself to the account of her admiration of you, for she is your likeness ready made. In fact, we are all of one mind about government matters, and notwithstanding your opinion, the Rose is himself a whig, and I am

a whig, and you, my dear, are a tory, and all the tories now-a-days call all the whigs republicans. How the deuce you came to be a tory is best known to yourself: you have to answer for this novelty to the shades of your ancestors, who were always whigs ever since we had any. Adieu.

W. C.

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LETTER LIX.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*Feb. 17, 1793.*

I have read the critique of my work in the Analytical Review, and am happy to have fallen into the hands of a critic, rigorous enough indeed, but a scholar, and a man of sense, and who does not deliberately intend me mischief. I am better pleased, indeed, that he censures some things, than I should have been with unmixt commendation; for his censure (to use the new diplomatic term) will accredit his praises. In his particular remarks he is for the most part right, and I shall be the better for them; but in his general ones I think he asserts too largely, and more than he could prove. With respect to inversions in particular, I know that they do not abound. Once they did, and I had Milton's example for it, not disapproved by Addison. But on \_\_\_\_\_'s remonstrance against them, I expunged the most, and in my new edition shall have fewer still. I know that they give dignity, and am sorry to part with them; but, to parody an old proverb, he who lives in the year ninety-three, must do as in the year ninety-three is done by others. The same remark I have to make on his censure of inharmonious lines. I know them to be much fewer than he asserts, and not more in number than I accounted indispensibly necessary to a due variation of cadence. I have, however, now, in conformity with modern taste (over-much delicate in my mind) given to the far greater number of them a flow as smooth as oil. A few I retain, and will, in compliment to my own judgment. He thinks me too faithful to compound epithets in the introductory lines, and I know his reason. He fears lest the English reader should blame Homer, whom he idolizes, though hardly more than I, for such constant repetition. But them I shall not alter. They are necessary to a just representation of the original. In the affair of Outis, I shall throw him flat on his back, by an unanswerable argument, which I shall give in a note, and with which I am furnished by Mrs. Unwin. So much for hypercriticism, which has run away with all my paper. This critic, by the way, is \_\_\_\_\_: I know him by infallible indications.

W. C.

## LETTER LX.

To the Reverend Mr. HURDIS.

*Weston, Feb. 23, 1793.*

My eyes, which have long been much inflamed, will hardly serve me for Homer, and oblige me to make all my letters short. You have obliged me much, by sending me so speedily the remainder of your notes. I have begun with them again, and find them, as before, very much to the purpose. More to the purpose they could not have been, had you been poetry professor already. I rejoice sincerely in the prospect you have of that office, which, whatever may be your own thoughts of the matter, I am sure you will fill with great sufficiency. Would that my interest and power to serve you were greater! One string to my bow I have, and one only, which shall not be idle for want of my exertions. I thank you, likewise, for your very entertaining notices and remarks in the natural way. The hurry in which I write would not suffer me to send you many in return, had I many to send, but only two or three present themselves.

Frogs will feed on worms. I saw a frog gathering into his gullet an earth-worm as long as himself: it cost him time and labour, but at last he succeeded.

Mrs. Unwin and I, crossing a brook, saw from the foot-bridge somewhat at the bottom of the water, which had the appearance of a flower. Observing attentively, we found that it consisted of a circular assemblage of minnows; their heads all met in a center, and their tails diverging at equal distances, and being elevated above their heads, gave them the appearance of a flower half blown. One was longer than the rest, and as often as a straggler came in sight, he quitted his place to pursue him, and having driven him away, he returned to it again, no other minnow offering to take it in his absence. This we saw him do several times. The object that had attached them all was a dead minnow, which they seemed to be devouring.

After a very rainy day, I saw on one of the flower borders what seemed a long hair, but it had a waving twining motion. Considering more nearly, I found it alive, and endued with spontaneity, but could not discover at the ends of it either head or tail, or any distinction of parts. I carried it into the house, when the air of a warm room dried and killed it presently.

W. C.

## LETTER LXI.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, Feb. 24, 1793.*

Your letter, so full of kindness, and so exactly in unison with my own feelings for you, should have had, as it deserved to have, an earlier answer, had I not been perpetually tormented with inflamed eyes, which are a sad hinderance to me in every thing. But, to make amends, if I do not send you an early answer, I send you at least a speedy one, being obliged to write as fast as my pen can trot, that I may shorten the time of poring upon paper as much as possible. Homer, too, has been another hinderance, for always when I can see, which is only during about two hours in a morning, and not at all by candle light, I devote myself to him, being in haste to send him a second time to the press, that nothing may stand in the way of Milton. By the way, where are my dear Tom's remarks, which I long to have, and must have soon, or they will come too late?

Oh you rogue, what would you give to have such a dream about Milton, as I had about a week since? I dreamed that, being in a house in the city, and with much company, looking towards the lower end of the room from the upper end of it, I descried a figure, which I immediately knew to be Milton's. He was very gravely, but very neatly attired in the fashion of his day, and had a countenance which filled me with those feelings that an affectionate child has for a beloved father; such, for instance, as Tom has for you. My first thought was wonder, where he could have been concealed so many years: my second, a transport of joy to find him still alive: my third, another transport to find myself in his company; and my fourth, a resolution to accost him: I did so, and he received me with a complacence, in which I saw equal sweetness and dignity. I spoke of his *Paradise Lost*, as every man must who is worthy to speak of it at all, and told him a long story of the manner in which it affected me, when I first discovered it, being at that time a school-boy. He answered me by a smile, and a gentle inclination of his head. He then grasped my hand affectionately, and with a smile that charmed me, said, "well, you for your part will do well also." At last, recollecting his great age, (for I understood him to be two hundred years old) I feared that I might fatigue him by much talking. I took my leave, and he took his with an air of the most perfect good breeding. His person, his features, his manner, were all so perfectly characteristic, that I am persuaded an apparition of him could not represent him more completely. This may be said to have been one of the dreams of Pindus, may it not?

How truly I rejoice that you have recovered Guy: that man won my heart the moment I saw him: give my love to him, and tell him I am truly glad he is alive again.

There is much sweetness in those lines from the Sonneteer of Avon, and not a little in dear Tom's; an earnest, I trust, of good things to come.

With Mary's kind love, I must now conclude myself, my dear brother, ever yours,  
LIPPUS.

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LETTER LXII.

To Mr. THOMAS HAYLEY.

Weston, March 14, 1793.

MY DEAR LITTLE CRITIC,

I thank you heartily for your observations, on which I set a higher value, because they have instructed me as much, and have entertained me more, than all the other strictures of our public judges in these matters. Perhaps I am not much more pleased with *shameless wolf*, &c. than you. But what is to be done, my little man? Coarse as the expressions are, they are no more than equivalent to those of Homer. The invective of the ancients was never tempered with good manners, as your papa can tell you; and my business, you know, is not to be more polite than my author, but to represent him as closely as I can.

*Dishonour 'd foul* I have wiped away, for the reason you give, which is a very just one, and the present reading is this:

Who had dared dishonour thus  
The life itself, &c.

Your objection to *kindler of the fires of heaven* I had the good fortune to anticipate, and expunged the dirty ambiguity some time since, wondering not a little that I had ever admitted it.

The fault you find with the two first verses of Nestor's speech discovers such a degree of just discernment, that but for your papa's assurance to the contrary, I must have suspected *him* as the author of that remark. Much as I should have respected it, if it had been so, I value it, I assure you, my little friend, still more as yours. In the new edition, the passage will be found thus altered:

Alas! great sorrow falls on Greece to-day.  
Priam, and Priam's sons, with all in Troy—  
Oh! how will they exult, and in their hearts  
Triumph, once hearing of this broil between  
The prime of Greece, in council, and in arms!



Where the word *reel* suggests to you the idea of a drunken mountain, it performs the service to which I destined it. It is a bold metaphor; but justified by one of the sublimest passages in scripture, compared with the sublimity of which even that of Homer suffers humiliation.

It is God himself, who speaking, I think, by the prophet Isaiah, says,

“The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard.”

With equal boldness in the same scripture, the poetry of which was never equalled, mountains are said to skip, to break out into singing, and the fields to clap their hands. I intend, therefore, that my Olympus shall be still tipsy.

The accuracy of your last remark, in which you convicted me of a bull, delights me. A fig for all critics but you! The blockheads could not find it. It shall stand thus:

First spake Polydamas——

Homer was more upon his guard than to commit such a blunder, for he says,

ἦν δ' ἄργος εὐεῖν.

And now, my dear little censor, once more accept my thanks. I only regret that your strictures are so few, being just and sensible as they are.

Tell your papa that he shall hear from me soon: accept mine, and my dear invalid's affectionate remembrances. Ever yours,

W. C.\*

\* *Note by the Editor.*—This letter may be regarded as a remarkable proof of the great poet's indulgent sweetness of temper, in favouring the literary talents of a child. A good natured reader will hardly blame the parental partiality to a dear departed scholar, which induces me to insert in this note the letter Cowper answered so kindly—a letter that readers, accustomed to contemplate the compositions of childhood, may consider, perhaps, as a curiosity, when they are assured, as they are with perfect truth, that every syllable of the letter, and of the criticisms annexed to it, were the voluntary and uncorrected production of a boy whose age was little more than twelve years.

TO WILLIAM COWPER, Esquire.

*Eartham, March 4, 1793.*

*Honoured King of Bards!*

Since you deign to demand the observations of an humble and unexperienced servant of yours, on a work of one who is so much his superior, (as he is ever ready to serve you with all his might) behold what you demand! But let me desire you not to censure me for my unskilful, and, perhaps, (as they will undoubtedly appear to you)

## LETTER LXIII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

*Weston, March 19, 1793.*

I am so busy every morning before breakfast (my only opportunity) stalking and strutting in Homeric stilts, that you ought to account it an instance of marvellous grace and favour that I condescend to write even to you. Sometimes I am seriously almost crazed with the multiplicity of matters before me, and the little or no time that I have for them; and sometimes I repose myself, after the fatigue of that distraction, on the pillow of despair; a pillow which has often served me in time of need, and is become, by frequent use, if not very comfortable, at least convenient. So reposed, I laugh at the world and say, "yes, you may gape and expect both Homer and Milton from me, but I'll be hanged if you ever get them."

In Homer you must know I am advanced as far as the fifteenth book of the Iliad, leaving nothing behind me that can reasonably offend the most fastidious; and I design him for public appearance in his new dress as soon as possible, for a reason which any poet may guess, if he will but thrust his hand into his pocket.

You forbid me to tantalize you with an invitation to Weston, and yet invite me to Eartham. No, no; there is no such happiness in store for me at present. Had I rambled at all, I was under promise to all my dear mother's kindred to go to Norfolk, and they are dying to see me: but I have told them that die they must, for I cannot go; and ergo, as you will perceive, can go no where else.

Thanks for Mazarine's epitaph: it is full of witty paradox, and is written with a force and severity which sufficiently bespeak the author. I account it an inestimable curiosity, and shall be happy, when time shall serve, with your aid, to make a good translation of it. But that will be a stubborn business. Adieu. The clock strikes eight—And now for Homer.

W. C.

ridiculous observations; but be so kind as to receive them as a mark of respectful affection from your obedient servant,

THOMAS HAYLEY.

Book. Line.

- i. 184—I cannot reconcile myself to these expressions, viz. "Ah, cloth'd with impudence," &c. and "shameless wolf," and (196) "face of flint."
- i. 195
- i. 508—"Dishonour'd foul" is, in my opinion, an uncleanly expression.
- i. 651—"Reel'd," I think, makes it appear as if Olympus was drunk.
- i. 749—"Kinder of the fires in heaven," I think, makes Jupiter appear too much like a lamp-lighter.
- ii. 317 to 319—These lines are, in my opinion, below the elevated genius of Mr. Cowper.
- xyiii. 300 to 304—This appears to me rather Irish, since in line 300 you say "no one sat," and in line 301, "Polydamas rose."

## LETTER LXIV.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*The Lodge, March 27, 1793.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I must send you a line of congratulation on the event of your transaction with Johnson, since you, I know, partake with me in the pleasure I receive from it. Few of my concerns have been so happily concluded. I am now satisfied with my bookseller, as I have substantial cause to be, and account myself in good hands; a circumstance as pleasant to me as any other part of the business; for I love dearly to be able to confide, with all my heart, in those with whom I am connected, of what kind soever the connection may be.

The question of printing or not printing the alterations seems difficult to decide. If they are not printed, I shall, perhaps, disoblige some purchasers of the first edition; and if they are, many others of them, perhaps a great majority, will never care about them. As far as I have gone I have made a fair copy, and when I have finished the whole, will send them to Johnson, together with the interleaved volumes. He will see, in a few minutes, what it will be best to do, and by his judgment I shall be determined. The opinion to which I most incline is, that they ought to be printed separately, for they are many of them rather long, here and there a whole speech, or a whole simile; and the verbal and lineal variations are so numerous, that altogether, I apprehend, they will give a new air to the work, and, I hope, a much improved one.

I forgot to say in the proper place, that some notes, although but very few, I have added already, and may perhaps see here and there opportunity for a few more. But notes being little wanted, especially by people at all conversant with classical literature, as most readers of Homer are, I am persuaded that, were they numerous, they would be deemed an incumbrance. I shall write to Johnson soon, perhaps to-morrow, and then shall say the same thing to him.

In point of health we continue much the same. Our united love, and many thanks for your prosperous negociations, attend yourself and whole family, and especially my little name-sake. Adieu.

W. C.

## LETTER LXV.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

*The Lodge, April 11, 1793.*

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

The long muster-roll of my great and small ancestors, I signed and dated, and sent up to Mr. Bluemantle, on Monday, according to your desire. Such a pompous affair, drawn out for my sake, reminds me of the old fable of the mountain in parturition and a mouse the produce. Rest undisturbed, say I, their lordly, ducal, and royal dust! Had they left me something handsome, I should have respected them more. But perhaps they did not know that such a one as I should have the honour to be numbered among their descendants. Well, I have a little bookseller that makes me some amends for their deficiency. He has made me a present; an act of liberality which I take every opportunity to blazon, as it well deserves. But you, I suppose, have learned it already from Mr. Rose.

Fear not, my man. You will acquit yourself very well, I dare say, both in standing for your degree, and when you have gained it. A little tremor, and a little shamefacedness in a stripling, like you, are recommendations rather than otherwise; and so they ought to be, being symptoms of an ingenuous mind, rather unfrequent in this age of brass.

What you say of your determined purpose, with God's help, to take up the cross and despise the shame, gives us both real pleasure. In our pedigree is found one, at least, who did it before you. Do you the like; and you will meet him in heaven, as sure as the scripture is the word of God.

The quarrel that the world has with evangelical men and doctrines, they would have with a host of angels in the human form; for it is the quarrel of owls with sunshine, of ignorance with divine illumination.

Adieu, my dear Johnny. We shall expect you with earnest desire at your coming, and receive you with much delight.

W. C.

## LETTER LXVI.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, April 23, 1793.*

MY DEAR FRIEND AND BROTHER,

Better late than never, and better a little than none at all! Had I been at liberty to consult my inclinations,

I would have answered your truly kind and affectionate letter immediately. But I am the busiest man alive, and when this epistle is dispatched, you will be the only one of my correspondents to whom I shall not be indebted. While I write this, my poor Mary sits mute; which I cannot well bear, and which, together with want of time to write much, will have a curtailing effect on my epistle.

My only studying time is still given to Homer, not to correction and amendment of him, for that is all over, but to writing notes. Johnson has expressed a wish for some, that the unlearned may be a little illuminated concerning classical story and the mythology of the ancients; and his behaviour to me has been so liberal that I can refuse him nothing. Poking into the old Greek commentators blinds me. But it is no matter: I am the more like Homer.

Ever yours, my dearest Hayley,

W. C.

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### LETTER LXVII.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

*May 5, 1793.*

My delay to answer your last kind letter, to which likewise you desired a speedy reply, must have seemed rather difficult to explain on any other supposition than that of illness. But illness has not been the cause, although, to say the truth, I cannot boast of having been lately very well. Yet has not this been the cause of my silence, but your own advice, very proper, and earnestly given to me, to proceed in the revisal of Homer. To this it is owing that, instead of giving an hour or two before breakfast to my correspondents, I allot that time entirely to my studies. I have nearly given the last touches to the poetry, and am now busied, far more laboriously, in writing notes at the request of my honest bookseller, transmitted to me in the first instance by you, and afterward repeated by himself. I am, therefore, deep in the old scholia, and have advanced to the latter part of Iliad nine, explaining, as I go, such passages as may be difficult to unlearned readers, and such only; for notes of that kind are the notes that Johnson desired. I find it a more laborious task than the translation was, and shall be heartily glad when it is over. In the mean time, all the letters I receive remain unanswered, or if they receive an answer, it is always a short one. Such this must be. Johnny is here, having flown over London.

Homer, I believe, will make a much more respectable appearance than before. Johnson now thinks it will be right to make a separate impression of the amendments.

W. C.



I breakfast every morning on seven or eight pages of the Greek commentators: for so much I am obliged to read in order to select, perhaps, three or four short notes for the readers of my translation.

Homer is indeed a tie upon me that must not, on any account, be broken till all his demands are satisfied: though I have fancied, while the revision of the *Odyssey* was at a distance, that it would ask less labour in the finishing, it is not unlikely that, when I take it actually in hand, I may find myself mistaken. Of this, at least, I am sure, that uneven verse abounds much more in it than it once did in the *Iliad*. Yet to the latter the critics objected on that account, though to the former never; perhaps because they had not read it. Hereafter they shall not quarrel with me on that score. The *Iliad* is now all smooth turnpike, and I will take equal care that there shall be no jolts in the *Odyssey*.

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LETTER LXVIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, May 7, 1793.*

MY DEAREST COZ.

You have thought me long silent, and so have many others. In fact, I have not for many months written punctually to any but yourself and Hayley. My time, the little I have, is so engrossed with Homer, that I have at this moment a bundle of unanswered letters by me, and letters likely to be so. Thou knowest, I dare say, what it is to have a head, weary with thinking. Mine is so fatigued by breakfast-time, three days out of four, I am utterly incapable of sitting down to my desk again for any purpose whatever.

I am glad I have convinced thee, at last, that thou art a tory. Your friend's definition of whig and tory may be just, for aught I know, as far as the latter are concerned; but, respecting the former I think him mistaken. There is no true whig who wishes all power in the hands of his own party. The division of it, which the lawyers call tripartite, is exactly what he desires; and he would have neither King, Lords nor Commons unequally trusted, or in the smallest degree predominant. Such a whig am I, and such whigs are the true friends of the constitution.

Adieu, my dear: I am dead with weariness.

W. C.

## LETTER LXIX.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

May 21, 1793.

MY DEAREST BROTHER,

You must either think me extremely idle or extremely busy, that I have made your last very kind letter wait so very long for an answer. The truth, however, is, that I am neither; but have had time enough to have scribbled to you, had I been able to scribble at all. To explain this riddle I must give you a short account of my proceedings.

I rise at six every morning, and fag till near eleven, when I breakfast. The consequence is, that I am so exhausted as not to be able to write when the opportunity offers. You will say, 'Breakfast before you work, and then your work will not fatigue you.' I answer, 'Perhaps I might, and your counsel would probably prove beneficial; but I cannot spare a moment for eating in the early part of the morning, having no other time for study.' This uneasiness, of which I complain, is a proof that I am somewhat stricken in years; and there is no other cause by which I can account for it, since I go early to bed, always between ten and eleven, and seldom fail to sleep well. Certain it is, ten years since I could have done as much, and sixteen years ago did actually much more, without suffering fatigue or any inconvenience from my labours. How insensibly old age steals on, and how often is it actually arrived before we suspect it! Accident alone, some occurrence that suggests a comparison of our former with our present selves, affords the discovery. Well, it is always good to be undeceived, especially on an article of such importance.

There has been a book lately published, entitled, *Man as he is*. I have heard a high character of it, as admirably written, and am informed that, for that reason, and because it inculcates whig principles, it is by many imputed to you. I contradicted this report, assuring my informant that had it been yours I must have known it, for that you have bound yourself to make me your father-confessor on all such wicked occasions, and not to conceal from me even a murder, should you happen to commit one.

I will not trouble you at present to send me any more books with a view to my notes on Homer. I am not without hopes that Sir John Throckmorton, who is expected here from Venice in a short time, may bring me Villoison's edition of the *Odyssey*. He certainly will, if he found it published, and that alone will be *instar omnium*.

Adieu, my dearest brother. Give my love to Tom, and thank

him for his book, of which I believe I need not have deprived him, intending that my readers shall detect the occult instruction contained in Homer's stories for themselves.

W. C.

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LETTER LXX.

To Lady HESKETH.

*The Lodge, June 1, 1793.*

MY DEAREST COZ.

You will not, you say, come to us now; and you tell us not when you will. These assignations *sine die* are such shadowy things, that I can neither grasp nor get any comfort from them. Know you not that hope is the next best thing to enjoyment? Give us, then, a hope, and a determinate time for that hope to fix on, and we will endeavour to be satisfied.

Johnny is gone to Cambridge, called thither to take his degree, and is much missed by me. He is such an active little fellow in my service that he cannot be otherwise. In three weeks, however, I shall hope to have him again for a fortnight. I have had a letter from him, containing an incident which has given birth to the following.

To A YOUNG FRIEND,

*On his arrival at CAMBRIDGE wet, when no rain had fallen there.*

If Gideon's fleece, which drench'd with dew he found,  
 While moisture none refresh'd the herbs around,  
 Might fitly represent the church, endow'd  
 With heavenly gifts, to heathens not allow'd;  
 In pledge, perhaps, of favours from on high,  
 Thy locks were wet, when other locks were dry.  
 Heav'n grant us half the omen! may we see,  
 Not drought on others, but much dew on thee!

These are spick and span. Johnny himself has not yet seen them. By the way, he has filled your book completely; and I will give thee a guinea if thou wilt search thy old book for a couple of songs, and two or three other pieces of which I know thou madest copies at the Vickarage, and which I have lost. The songs I know are pretty good, and I would fain recover them.

W. C.

## LETTER LXXI.

To the Reverend Mr. HURDIS.

*Weston, June 6, 1793.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I seize a passing moment merely to say, that I feel for your distresses and sincerely pity you, and I shall be happy to learn from your next, that your sister's amendment has superseded the necessity you feared, of a journey to London. Your candid account of the effect that your afflictions have both on your spirits and temper, I can perfectly understand, having laboured much in that fire myself, and perhaps more than any man. It is in such a school, however, that we must learn, if we ever truly learn it, the natural depravity of the human heart, and of our own in particular; together with the consequence that necessarily follows such wretched premises—our indispensable need of the atonement, and our inexpressible obligations to him who made it. This reflection cannot escape a thinking mind, looking back on those ebullitions of fretfulness and impatience, to which it has yielded in a season of great affliction.

Having lately had company who left us only on the fourth, I have done nothing—nothing, indeed, since my return from Sussex, except a trifle or two which it was incumbent upon me to write. Milton hangs in doubt; neither spirits nor opportunity suffice me for that labour. I regret continually that I ever suffered myself to be persuaded to undertake it. The most that I hope to effect is a complete revisal of my own Homer. Johnson told my friend, who has just left me, that it will begin to be reviewed in the next Analytical, and that he *hoped* the review of it would not offend me. By this I understand that if I am not offended it will be owing more to my own equanimity than to the mildness of the critic. So be it! He will put an opportunity of victory over myself into my hands, and I will endeavour not to lose it. Adieu.

W. C.

## LETTER LXXII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, June 20, 1793.*

Dear architect of fine *chateaux in air*,  
 Worthier to stand for ever, if they could,  
 Than any built of stone, or yet of wood,  
 For back of royal elephant to bear!

Oh for permission from the skies to share,  
 Much to my own, though little to thy good,  
 With thee (not subject to the jealous mood)  
 A partnership of literary ware!

But I am bankrupt now; and doom'd henceforth  
 To drudge in descant dry, on others' lays;  
 Bards, I acknowledge, of unequal worth!  
 But what is commentator's happiest praise?

That he has furnish'd lights for other eyes,  
 Which they who need them use, and then despise.

What remains for me to say on this subject, my dear brother bard, I will say in prose. There are other impediments which I could not comprize within the bounds of a sonnet.

My poor Mary's infirm condition makes it impossible for me, at present, to engage in a work such as you propose. My thoughts are not sufficiently free, nor have I, or can I, by any means, find opportunity: added to which comes a difficulty, which, though you are not at all aware of it, presents itself to me under a most forbidding appearance: can you guess it? No, not you: neither, perhaps, will you be able to imagine that such a difficulty can possibly subsist. If your hair begins to bristle, stroak it down again, for there is no need why it should erect itself. It concerns me, not you. I know myself too well not to know that I am nobody in verse, unless in a corner, and alone, and unconnected in my operations. This is not owing to want of love for you, my brother, or the most consummate confidence in you; for I have both in a degree that has not been exceeded in the experience of any friend you have, or ever had. But I am so made up; I will not enter into a metaphysical analysis of my strange composition in order to detect the true cause of this evil; but, on a general view of the matter, I suspect that it proceeds from that shyness, which has been my effectual and almost fatal hinderance on many other important occasions; and which I should feel, I well know, on this, to a degree that would perfectly cripple me.—No! I shall neither do, nor attempt any thing of consequence more, unless my poor Mary get better—nor even then, unless it should please God to give me another nature—in concert with any man; I could not, even with my own father or brother, were they now alive. Small game must serve me at present, and till I have done with Homer and Milton, a sonnet, or some such matter must content me. The



utmost that I aspire to, (and heaven knows with how feeble a hope) is to write, at some better opportunity, and when my hands are free, *The four Ages*. Thus I have opened my heart unto thee.

W. C.

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LETTER LXXIII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

MY DEAREST BROTHER,

*Weston, July 7, 1793.*

If the excessive heat of this day, which forbids me to do any thing else, will permit me to scribble to you, I shall rejoice. To do this is a pleasure to me at all times, but to do it now, a double one; because I am in haste to tell you how much I am delighted with your projected quadruple alliance, and to assure you, that if it please God to afford me health, spirits, ability, and leisure, I will not fail to devote them all to the production of my quota, *The four Ages*.

You are very kind to humour me as you do, and had need be a little touched yourself with all my oddities, that you may know how to administer to mine. All whom I love do so, and I believe it to be impossible to love heartily those who do not. People must not do me good in *their* way, but in my *own*, and then they do me good indeed. My pride, my ambition, and my friendship for you, and the interest I take in my own dear self, will all be consulted and gratified by an arm-in-arm appearance with you in public; and I shall work with more zeal and assiduity at Homer; and when Homer is finished at Milton, with the prospect of such a coalition before me. But what shall I do with a multitude of small pieces from which I intended to select the best, and adding them to *The four Ages*, to have made a volume? Will there be room for them upon your plan? I have re-touched them, and will re-touch them again. Some of them will suggest pretty devices to a designer, and, in short, I have a desire not to lose them.

I am at this moment, with all the imprudence natural to poets, expending nobody knows what, in embellishing my premises, or rather the premises of my neighbour Courteney, which is more poetical still. I have built one summer-house already with the boards of my old study, and am building another, spick and span as they say. I have also a stone-cutter now at work, setting a bust of my dear old Grecian on a pedestal; and beside all this, I meditate still more, that is to be done in the autumn. Your project, therefore, is most opportune; as any project must needs be that has so distinct a tendency to put money into the pocket of one so likely to want it.

Ah brother poet! send me of your shade,  
 And bid the zephyrs hasten to my aid;  
 Or, like a worm unearth'd at noon, I go,  
 Dispatch'd by sunshine, to the shades below.

My poor Mary is as well as the heat will allow her to be, and whether it be cold or sultry, is always affectionately mindful of you and yours. Adieu.

W. C.

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LETTER LXXIV.

To the Reverend Mr. GREATHEED.

July 23, 1793.

I was not without some expectation of a line from you, my dear sir, though you did not promise me one at your departure; and am happy not to have been disappointed: still happier to learn that you and Mrs. Greatheed are well, and so delightfully situated. Your kind offer to us of sharing with you the house which you at present inhabit, added to the short but lively description of the scenery that surrounds it, want nothing to win our acceptance, should it please God to give Mrs. Unwin a little more strength, and should I be ever master of my time, so as to be able to gratify myself with what would please me most. But many have claims upon us, and some who cannot absolutely be said to have any, would yet complain and think themselves slighted, should we prefer rocks and caves to them. In short, we are called so many ways, that these numerous demands are likely to operate as a *remora*, and to keep us fixt at home. Here we can occasionally have the pleasure of yours and Mrs. Greatheed's company, and to have it here must, I believe, content us. Hayley, in his last letter, gives me reason to expect the pleasure of seeing him and his dear boy Tom in the autumn. He will use all his eloquence to draw us to Eartham again. My cousin Johnny of Norfolk holds me under promise to make my first trip thither, and the very same promise I have hastily made to visit Sir John and Lady Throckmorton, at Bucklands. How to reconcile such clashing promises, and give satisfaction to all, would puzzle me, had I nothing else to do; and therefore, as I say, the result will probably be, that we shall find ourselves obliged to go no where, since we cannot every where.

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Wishing you both safe at home again, and to see you as soon as may be here, I remain affectionately yours,

W. C.

## LETTER LXXV.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, July, 24, 1793.*

I have been vexed with myself, my dearest brother, and with every thing about me, not excepting even Homer himself, that I have been obliged so long to delay an answer to your last kind letter. If I listen any longer to calls another way, I shall hardly be able to tell you how happy we are in the hope of seeing you in the autumn, before the autumn will have arrived. Thrice welcome will you and your dear boy be to us, and the longer you will afford us your company, the more welcome. I have set up the head of Homer, on a famous fine pedestal, and a very majestic appearance he makes. I am now puzzled about a motto, and wish you to decide for me between two, one of which I have composed myself, a Greek one, as follows :

Εἰκοσι τις ταυτην ; κλυτον ανερος ενομ' ολωλεν.  
 Ουνομα δ' ετος ανηρ αφθιτον αιεν εχει.

The other is my own translation of a passage in the Odyssey, the original of which I have seen used as a motto to an engraved head of Homer many a time.

The present edition of the lines stands thus :

Him partially the muse,  
 And dearly lov'd, yet gave him good and ill :  
 She quench'd his sight, but gave him strains divine.

Tell me, by the way, (if you ever had any speculations on the subject) what is it you suppose Homer to have meant in particular, when he ascribed his blindness to the muse? for that he speaks of himself, under the name of Demodocus, in the eighth book, I believe, is by all admitted. How could the old bard study himself blind, when books were either few, or none at all? And did he write his poems? If neither were the cause, as seems reasonable to imagine, how could he incur his blindness by such means as could be justly imputable to the muse? Would mere thinking blind him? I want to know :

“ Call up some spirit from the vasty deep !”

I said to my Sam\*—“ Sam, build me a shed in the garden, with

\* A very affectionate worthy domestic who attended his master into Sussex.

any thing that you can find, and make it rude and rough like one of those at Eartham." "Yes, Sir," says Sam, and straightway laying his own noddle and the carpenter's noddle together, has built me a thing fit for Stow gardens. Is not this vexatious? I threaten to inscribe it thus :

Beware of building! I intended  
Rough logs and thatch, and thus it ended.

But my Mary says I shall break Sam's heart, and the carpenter's too, and will not consent to it. Poor Mary sleeps but ill. How have you lived who cannot bear a sun-beam?

Adieu, my dearest Hayley.

W. C.

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LETTER LXXVI.

To Lady HESKETH.

*Weston, August 11, 1793.*

MY DEAREST COZ.

I am glad that my poor and hasty attempts to express some little civility to Miss Fanshaw, and the amiable Count, have your and her approbation. The lines addressed to her were not what I would have made them, but lack of time, a lack which always presses me, would not suffer me to improve them. Many thanks for her letter, which, were my merits less the subject of it, I should, without scruple, say is an excellent one. She writes with the force and accuracy of a person skilled in more languages than are spoken in the present day, as I doubt not that she is. I perfectly approve the theme she recommends to me, but am at present so totally absorbed in Homer, that all I do beside is ill done, being hurried over; and I would not execute ill a subject of her recommending.

I shall watch the walnut-trees with more attention than they who eat them, which I do in some hope, though you do not expressly say so, that when their threshing-time arrives we shall see you here. I am now going to paper my new study, and in a short time it will be fit to inhabit.

Lady Spencer has sent me a present from Rome, by the hands of Sir John Throckmorton—engravings of Odyssey subjects, after figures by Flaxman, a statuary at present resident there, of high repute, and much a friend of Hayley's.

Thou livest, my dear, I acknowledge, in a very fine country, but they have spoiled it by building London in it. Adieu.

W. C.

## LETTER LXXVII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, August 15, 1793.*

Instead of a pound or two, spending a mint  
 Must serve me at least, I believe, with a hint,  
 That building and building a man may be driven  
 At last out of doors, and have no house to live in.

Besides, my dearest brother, they have not only built for me what I did not want, but have ruined a notable tetrastic by doing so. I had written one which I designed for a hermitage, and it will by no means suit the fine and pompous affair which they have made instead of one. So that, as a poet, I am every way afflicted; made poorer than I need have been, and robbed of my verses. What case can be more deplorable?

You must not suppose me ignorant of what Flaxman has done, or that I have not seen it, or that I am not actually in possession of it, at least of the engravings which you mention. In fact, I have had them more than a fortnight. Lady Dowager Spencer, to whom I inscribed my *Odyssey*, and who was at Rome when Sir John Throckmorton was there, charged him with them as a present to me, and arriving here lately he executed his commission. Romney, I doubt not, is right in his judgment of them: he is an artist himself, and cannot easily be mistaken; and I take his opinion as an oracle, the rather, because it coincides exactly with my own. The figures are highly classical, antique, and elegant; especially that of Penelope, who, whether she wakes or sleeps, must necessarily charm all beholders.

Your scheme of embellishing my *Odyssey* with these plates is a kind one, and the fruit of your benevolence to me; but Johnson, I fear, will hardly stake so much money as the cost would amount to, on a work, the fate of which is at present uncertain. Nor could we adorn the *Odyssey* in this splendid manner, unless we had similar ornaments to bestow on the *Iliad*. Such, I presume, are not ready, and much time must elapse, even if Flaxman should accede to the plan, before he could possibly prepare them. Happy, indeed, should I be to see a work of mine so nobly accompanied, but should that good fortune ever attend me, it cannot take place till the third or fourth edition shall afford the occasion. This I regret, and I regret too, that you will have seen them before I can have an opportunity to show them to you. Here is six-pence for you if you will abstain from the sight of them while you are in London.



The sculptor?—nameless, though once dear to fame ;  
But this man bears an everlasting name.\*

So I purpose it shall stand; and on the pedestal, when you come,  
in that form you will find it. The added line from the *Odyssey* is charming, but the assumption of sonship to Homer seems too daring. Suppose it stood thus:—

Ω; δὴ παῖς ὡ πατρὶ, καὶ ἔποτε ληστομαὶ αὐτῆ.

I am not sure that this would be clear of the same objection, and it departs from the text still more.

With my poor Mary's best love, and our united wishes to see you here, I remain, my dearest brother, ever yours,

W. C.

#### LETTER LXXVIII.

To Mrs. COURTENEY.

*Weston, August 20, 1793.*

My dearest Catharina is too reasonable, I know, to expect news from me, who live on the outside of the world, and know nothing that passes within it. The best news is, that though you are gone, you are not gone for ever, as once I supposed you were, and said that we should probably meet no more. Some news, however, we have; but then I conclude that you have already received it from the Doctor, and that thought almost deprives me of all courage to relate it. On the evening of the feast, Bob Archer's house affording, I suppose, the best room for the purpose, all the lads and lasses who felt themselves disposed to dance, assembled there. Long time they danced, at least long time they did something a little like it, when at last the company having retired, the fiddler asked Bob for a lodging. Bob replied that his beds were all full of his own family, but if he chose it he would show him a hay-cock, where he might sleep as sound as in any bed whatever. So forth they went together, and when they reached the place, the fiddler knocked down Bob and demanded his money. But happily for Bob, though he might be knocked down, and actually was so, yet he could not possibly be robbed, having nothing. The fiddler, therefore, having amused himself with kicking and beating him as he lay, as long as he saw good, left him, and has never been heard of since, nor inquired after indeed, being no doubt the last man in the world whom Bob wishes to see again.

\* A translation of Cowper's Greek verses on his bust of Homer.

By a letter from Hayley to-day, I learn that Flaxman, to whom we are indebted for those Odyssey figures which Lady Frog brought over, has almost finished a set for the Iliad also. I should be glad to embellish my Homer with them, but neither my bookseller nor I shall probably choose to risque so expensive an ornament on a work, whose reception with the public is at present doubtful.

Adieu, my dearest Catharina. Give my best love to your husband. Come home as soon as you can, and accept our united very best wishes.

W. C.

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LETTER LXXIX.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*The Lodge, August 22, 1793.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I rejoice that you have had so pleasant an excursion, and have beheld so many beautiful scenes. Except the delightful upway, I have seen them all. I have lived much at Southampton, have slept and caught a sore-throat at Lyndhurst, and have swam in the bay of Weymouth. It will give us great pleasure to see you here, should your business give you an opportunity to finish your excursions of this season with one to Weston.

As for my going on, it is much as usual. I rise at six; an industrious and wholesome practice from which I have never swerved since March. I breakfast generally about eleven—have given all the intermediate time to my old delightful bard. Villoison no longer keeps me company. I therefore now jog along with Clarke and Barnes at my elbow, and from the excellent annotations of the former select such as I think likely to be useful, or that recommend themselves by the amusement they may afford; of which sorts there are not a few. Barnes also affords me some of both kinds, but not so many, his notes being chiefly paraphrastical or grammatical. My only fear is lest, between them both, I should make my work too voluminous.

W. C.

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LETTER LXXX.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, August 27, 1793.*

I thank you, my dear brother, for consulting the Gibbonian oracle on the question concerning Homer's muse, and his blindness. I proposed it likewise to my little neighbour Buchanan, who gave me precisely the same answer. I felt

an insatiable thirst to learn something new concerning him, and, despairing of information from others, was willing to hope that I had stumbled on matter unnoticed by the commentators, and might, perhaps, acquire a little intelligence from himself. But the great and the little oracle together have extinguished that hope, and I despair now of making any curious discoveries about him.

Since Flaxman (which I did not know till your letter told me so) has been at work for the Iliad, as well as the Odyssey, it seems a great pity that the engravings should not be bound up with some Homer or other; and, as I said before, I should have been too proud to have bound them up in mine. But there is an objection, at least such it seems to me, that threatens to disqualify them for such a use; namely, the shape and size of them, which are such that no book of the usual form could possibly receive them, save in a folded state, which, I apprehend, would be to murder them.

The monument of Lord Mansfield, for which you say he is engaged, will, I dare say, prove a noble effort of genius. Statuaries, as I have heard an eminent one say, do not much trouble themselves about a likeness: else I would give much to be able to communicate to Flaxman the perfect idea that I have of the subject, such as he was forty years ago. He was at that time wonderfully handsome, and would expound the most mysterious intricacies of the law, or recapitulate both matter and evidence of a cause, as long as from hence to Earham, with an intelligent smile on his features, that bespoke plainly the perfect ease with which he did it. The most abstruse studies, I believe, never cost him any labour.

You say nothing lately of your intended journey our way: yet the year is waning, and the shorter days give you a hint to lose no time unnecessarily.—Lately we had the whole family at the Hall, and now we have nobody. The Threackmortons are gone into Berkshire, and the Courtenays into Yorkshire. They are so pleasant a family, that I heartily wish you to see them; and at the same time wish to see you before they return, which will not be sooner than October. How shall I reconcile these wishes, seemingly opposite? Why, by wishing that you may come soon and stay long. I know no other way of doing it.

My poor Mary is much as usual.—I have set up Homer's head, and inscribed the pedestal; my own Greek at the top, with your translation under it, and

*Ως δὴ πατρὶς ὁ πατήρ, &c.*

It makes altogether a very smart and learned appearance.

W. C.

LETTER LXXXI.  
To Lady HESKETH.*August 29, 1793.*

Your question, at what time your coming to us will be most agreeable, is a knotty one, and such as, had I the wisdom of Solomon, I should be puzzled to answer. I will, therefore, leave it still a question, and refer the time of your journey Weston-ward entirely to your own election; adding this one limitation, however, that I do not wish to see you exactly at present, on account of the unfinished state of my study, the wainscot of which still smells of paint, and which is not yet papered. But to return: as I have insinuated, thy pleasant company is the thing which I always wish, and as much at one time as at another. I believe, if I examine myself minutely, since I despair of ever having it in the height of summer, which, for your sake, I should desire most, the depth of the winter is the season which would be most eligible to me. For then it is that, in general, I have most need of a cordial, and particularly in the month of January. I am sorry, however, that I have departed so far from my first purpose, and am answering a question which I declared myself unable to answer. Choose thy own time, secure of this, that whatever time that be, it will always to us be a welcome one.

I thank you for your pleasant extract of Miss Fanshaw's letter.

Her pen drops eloquence as sweet  
As any muse's tongue can speak;  
Nor need a scribe, like her, regret  
Her want of Latin or of Greek.

And now, my dear, adieu! I have done more than I expected, and begin to feel myself exhausted with so much scribbling at the end of four hours close application to study.

W. C.

## LETTER LXXXII.

To the Reverend Mr. JOHNSON.

*Weston, Sept. 6, 1793.*

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

To do a kind thing, and in a kind manner, is a double kindness, and no man is more addicted to both than you, or more skilful in contriving them. Your plan to surprise me agreeably succeeded to admiration. It was only the day

before yesterday that, whiie we walked after dinner in the orchard, Mrs. Unwin between Sam and me, hearing the Hall-clock, I observed a great difference between that and ours, and began immediately to lament, as I had often done, that there was not a sun-dial in all Weston to ascertain the true time for us. My complaint was long, and lasted till, having turned into the grass walk, we reached the new building at the end of it, where we sat awhile and reposed ourselves. In a few minutes we returned by the way we came, when what think you was my astonishment to see what I had not seen before, though I had passed close by it, a smart sun-dial mounted on a smart stone pedestal! I assure you it seemed the effect of conjuration. I stopped short, and exclaimed, "Why, here is a sun-dial, and upon our own ground! How is this? Tell me, Sam, how came it here? Do you know any thing about it?" At first I really thought (that is to say, as soon as I could think at all) that this fac-totum of mine, Sam Roberts, having often heard me deplore the want of one, had given orders for the supply of that want himself, without my knowledge, and was half pleased and half offended. But he soon exculpated himself by imputing the fact to you. It was brought up to Weston, it seems, about noon: but Andrews stopped the cart at the blacksmith's, whence he sent to inquire if I was gone to my walk. As it happened, I walked not till two o'clock. So there it stood waiting till I should go forth, and was introduced before my return. Fortunately, too, I went out at the church end of the village, and consequently saw nothing of it. How I could possibly pass it without seeing it, when it stood in the walk, I know not; but it is certain that I did: and where I shall fix it now I know as little. It cannot stand between the two gates, the place of your choice, as I understand from Samuel, because the hay-cart must pass that way in the season. But we are now busy in winding the walk all round the orchard, and in so doing shall doubtless stumble at last upon some open spot that will suit it.

There it shall stand while I live, a constant monument of your kindness.

I have this moment finished the twelfth book of the Odyssey, and I read the Iliad to Mrs. Unwin every evening.

The effect of this reading is, that I still spy blemishes, something, at least, that I can mend; so that, after all, the transcript of alterations which you and George have made will not be a perfect one. It would be foolish to forego an opportunity of improvement for such a reason; neither will I. It is ten o'clock, and I must breakfast. Adieu, therefore, my dear Johnny! Remember your appointment to see us in October. Ever yours,

W. C.



## LETTER LXXXIII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Sept.* 8, 1793.*Non sum quod simulo*, my dearest brother!

I seem cheerful upon paper sometimes, when I am absolutely the most dejected of all creatures. Desirous, however, to gain something myself by my own letters, unprofitable as they may and must be to my friends, I keep melancholy out of them as much as I can, that I may, if possible, by assuming a less gloomy air, deceive myself, and by feigning with a continuance, improve the fiction into reality.

So you have seen Flaxman's figures, which I intended you should not have seen till I had spread them before you! How did you dare to look at them? You should have covered your eyes with both hands. I am charmed with Flaxman's Penelope, and though you don't deserve that I should, will send you a few lines, such as they are, with which she inspired me the other day while I was taking my noon-day walk.

The suitors sinn'd, but with a fair excuse,  
Whom all this elegance might well seduce;  
Nor can our censure on the husband fall,  
Who, for a wife so lovely, slew them all.

I know not that you will meet any body here when we see you in October, unless, perhaps, my Johnny should happen to be with us. If Tom is charmed with the thoughts of coming to Weston, we are equally so with the thoughts of seeing him here. At his years I should hardly hope to make his visit agreeable to him, did not I know that he is of a temper and disposition that must make him happy every where. Give our love to him. If Romney can come with you, we have both room to receive him, and hearts to make him most welcome.

W. C.

## LETTER LXXXIV.

To Mrs. COURTENEY.

*Sept.* 16, 1793.

A thousand thanks, my dearest Catharina, for your pleasant letter; one of the pleasantest that I have received since your departure. You are very good to apologize for your delay, but I had not flattered myself with the hopes of a

speedier answer. Knowing full well your talents for entertaining your friends who are present, I was sure you would with difficulty find half an hour that you could devote to an absent one.

I am glad that you think of your return. Poor Weston is a desolation without you. In the mean time I amuse myself as well as I can, thrumming old Homer's lyre, and turning the premises upside down. Upside down indeed, for so it is literally that I have been dealing with the orchard almost ever since you went, digging and delving it around to make a new walk, which now begins to assume the shape of one, and to look as if, some time or other, it may serve in that capacity. Taking my usual exercise there the other day with Mrs. Unwin, a wide disagreement between your clock and ours occasioned me to complain much, as I have often done, of the want of a dial. Guess my surprise when, at the close of my complaint, I saw one; saw one close at my side, a smart one, glittering in the sun, and mounted on a pedestal of stone. I was astonished. "This," I exclaimed, "is absolute conjuration."—It was a most mysterious affair, but the mystery was at last explained.

This scribble, I presume, will find you just arrived at Bucklands. I would with all my heart, that, since dials can be thus suddenly conjured from one place to another, I could be so too, and could start up before your eyes in the middle of some walk or lawn, where you and Lady Frog are wandering.

While Pitcairne whistles for his family-estate in Fifeshire, he will do well if he will sound a few notes for me. I am originally of the same shire, and a family of my name is still there, to whom, perhaps, he may whistle on my behalf, not altogether in vain. So shall his fife excel all my poetical efforts, which have not yet, and I dare say never will, effectually charm one acre of ground into my possession.

Remember me to Sir John, Lady Frog, and your husband; tell them I love them all. She told me once she was jealous; now, indeed, she seems to have some reason, since to her I have not written, and have written twice to you. But bid her be of good courage; in due time I will give her proof of my constancy.

W. C.

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#### LETTER LXXXV.

To the Reverend Mr. JOHNSON.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

*Sept.* 29, 1793.

You have done well to leave off visiting and being visited. Visits are insatiable devourers of time, and

fit only for those who, if they did not that, would do nothing. The worst consequence of such departures from common practice is to be termed a singular sort of a fellow, or an odd-fish; a sort of reproach that a man might be wise enough to contemn, who had not half your understanding.

I look forward with pleasure to October the eleventh, the day which I expect will be *albo notandus lafillo*, on account of your arrival here.

Here you will meet Mr. Rose, who comes on the eighth, and brings with him Mr. Lawrence the painter—you may guess for what purpose. Lawrence returns when he has made his copy of me, but Mr. Rose will remain perhaps as long as you will. Hayley, on the contrary, will come, I suppose, just in time not to see you. Him we expect on the twentieth. I trust however that thou wilt so order thy pastoral matters, as to make thy stay here as long as possible.

Lady Hesketh, in her last letter, inquires very kindly after you; asked me for your address, and purposes soon to write to you. We hope to see her in November: so that after a summer without company, we are likely to have an autumn and winter sociable enough.

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LETTER LXXXVI.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

October 5, 1793.

My good intentions towards you, my dearest brother, are continually frustrated; and, which is most provoking, not by such engagements and avocations as have a right to my attention, such as those to my Mary, and to the old bard of Greece, but mere impertinences, such as calls of civility from persons not very interesting to me, and letters from a distance still less interesting, because the writers of them are strangers. A man sent me a long copy of verses, which I could do no less than acknowledge. They were silly enough, and cost me eighteen-pence, which was seventeen pence halfpenny farthing more than they were worth. Another sent me, at the same time, a plan, requesting my opinion of it, and that I would lend him my name as editor; a request with which I shall not comply; but I am obliged to tell him so, and one letter is all that I have time to dispatch in a day, sometimes half a one, and sometimes I am not able to write at all. Thus it is that my time perishes, and I can neither give so much of it as I would to you, nor to any other valuable purpose.

On Tuesday we expect company—Mr. Rose and Lawrence the

painter. Yet once more is my patience to be exercised, and once more I am made to wish that my face had been moveable, to put on and take off at pleasure, so as to be portable in a band-box, and sent to the artist. These, however, will be gone, as I believe I told you, before you arrive, at which time I know not that any body will be here, except my Johnny, whose presence will not at all interfere with our readings. You will not, I believe, find me a very slashing critic. I hardly, indeed, expect to find any thing in your life of Milton that I shall sentence to amputation. How should it be too long? A well written work, sensible and spirited, such as yours was when I saw it, is never so. But, however, we shall see. I promise to spare nothing that I think may be lopped off with advantage.

I began this letter yesterday, but could not finish it till now. I have risen this morning like an infernal frog out of Acheron, covered with the ouze and mud of melancholy. For this reason I am not sorry to find myself at the bottom of my paper, for had I more room, perhaps I might fill it all with croaking, and make a heart-ache at Eartham, which I wish to be always cheerful. Adieu. My poor sympathising Mary is of course sad, but always mindful of you.

W. C.

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LETTER LXXXVII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Oct. 18, 1793.

MY DEAREST BROTHER,

I have not, at present, much that is necessary to say here, because I shall have the happiness of seeing you so soon: my time, according to custom, is a mere scrap; for which reason such must be my letter also.

You will find here more than I have hitherto given you reason to expect, but none who will not be happy to see you. These, however, stay with us but a short time, and will leave us in full possession of Weston on Wednesday next.

I look forward with joy to your coming, heartily wishing you a pleasant journey, in which my poor Mary joins me. Give our best love to Tom; without whom, after having been taught to look for him, we should feel our pleasure in the interview much diminished.

*Læti expectamus et puerumque tuum.*

W. C.

My second visit to Weston (a scene that I cannot mention without feeling it endeared to me by the pleasures and by the pains of joyous and of mournful remembrance) took place very soon after the date of the last letter. I found Cowper apparently well, and enlivened by the society of his young kinsman from Norfolk, and another of his favourite friends, Mr. Rose. The latter came recently from the seat of Lord Spencer, in Northamptonshire, and commissioned by that accomplished nobleman to invite Cowper and his guests to Althorpe, where my friend Gibbon was to make a visit of considerable continuance.

All the guests of Cowper now recommended it to him, very strongly, to venture on this little excursion to a house whose master he most cordially respected, and whose library alone might be regarded as a magnet of very powerful attraction to every elegant scholar.

I wished to see Cowper and Gibbon personally acquainted, because I perfectly knew the real benevolence of both; for widely as they might differ on one important article, they were both able and worthy to appreciate and enjoy the extraordinary mental powers, and the rare colloquial excellence of each other. But the constitutional shyness of the poet conspired with the present infirm state of Mrs. Unwin to prevent their meeting. He sent Mr. Rose and me to make his apology for declining so honourable an invitation. After a visit to Althorpe, where we had nothing to regret but the absence of Cowper, I returned to devote myself to him, when his younger guests were departed. Our social employment, at this season, he has very cheerfully described in the following letter to Mrs. Courtney.

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#### LETTER LXXXVIII.

To Mrs. COURTENEY.

*Weston, Nov. 4, 1793.*

I seldom rejoice in a day of soaking rain like this; but in this, my dearest Catharina, I do rejoice sincerely, because it affords me an opportunity of writing to you, which, if fair weather had invited us into the orchard-walk at the usual hour, I should not have easily found. I am a most busy man, busy to a degree that sometimes half distracts me; but if complete distraction be occasioned by having the thoughts too much and too long attached to a single point, I am in no danger of it, with such a perpetual whirl are mine whisked about from one subject to another. When two poets meet there are fine doings, I can assure you. My Homer finds work for Hayley, and his *Life of*



Milton work for me, so that we are neither of us one moment idle. Poor Mrs. Unwin, in the mean time, sits quiet in her corner, occasionally laughing at us both, and not seldom interrupting us with some question or remark, for which she is constantly rewarded by me, with a "Hush—hold your peace."—Bless yourself, my dear Catharina, that you are not connected with a poet, especially that you have not two to deal with: ladies who have may be bidden, indeed, to hold their peace, but very little peace have they. How should they, in fact, have any, continually enjoined as they are to be silent?

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The same fever that has been so epidemic there, has been severely felt here likewise: some have died, and a multitude have been in danger. Two under our own roof have been infected with it, and I am not sure that I have perfectly escaped myself, but I am now well again.

I have persuaded Hayley to stay a week longer, and again my hopes revive that he may yet have an opportunity to know my friends before he returns into Sussex.—I write amidst a chaos of interruptions. Hayley on one hand spouts Greek, and on the other hand Mrs. Unwin continues talking, sometimes to us, and sometimes, because we are both too busy to attend to her, she holds a dialogue with herself. Quere—Is not this a bull? and ought I not, instead of dialogue, to have said soliloquy?

Adieu. With our united love to all your party, and with ardent wishes soon to see you all at Weston, I remain, my dearest Catharina, ever yours,

W. C.

Cowper entreated me, with great kindness, to remain the whole winter at Weston, and engage with him in a regular and complete revisal of his Homer. I wanted not inclination for an office so agreeable; but it struck me that I might render much more essential service to the poet, as I returned through London, by quickening in the minds of his more powerful friends a seasonable attention to his interest and welfare. My fears for him, in every point of view, were alarmed by his present very singular condition. He possessed completely, at this period, all the admirable faculties of his mind, and all the native tenderness of his heart; but there was something indescribable in his appearance, which led me to apprehend that without some signal event in his favour to re-animate his spirits, they would gradually sink into hopeless dejection. The

state of his aged, infirm companion afforded additional ground for increasing solicitude. Her cheerful and beneficent spirit could hardly resist her own accumulated maladies so far as to preserve ability sufficient to watch over the tender health of him whom she had watched and guarded so long. Imbecility of body and mind must gradually render this tender and heroic woman unfit for the charge which she had so laudably sustained. The signs of such imbecility were beginning to be painfully visible: nor can nature present a spectacle more truly pitiable than imbecility in such a shape, eagerly grasping for dominion which it knows not either how to retain or how to relinquish.

I left Weston in November, painfully anxious for the alarming state of my two friends, and I was so unfortunate as to add to their complicated troubles some degree of inquietude for my health. A slight attack of an epidemical fever had rather hastened than retarded my departure; but my indisposition proved more serious than I had supposed it to be; and instead of being able to execute some literary commissions for Cowper in London, with the alacrity which affection suggests, I was obliged to inform him that I was confined by illness. He wrote to me immediately, with the tenderness peculiar to himself, and my reviving health soon enabled me to enliven his apprehensive mind, not only with an account of my recovery, but with intelligence relating to his own literary engagements that had a tendency to relieve his spirits from a considerable part of their present embarrassment and dejection. His next letter to one of his confidential friends contains a very cheerful and just description of his favourite residence.

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LETTER LXXXIX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

*November 5, 1793.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

In a letter from Lady Hesketh, which I received not long since, she informed me how very pleasantly she had spent some time at Wargrove. We now begin to expect her here, where our charms of situation are, perhaps, not equal to yours, yet by no means contemptible. She told me she had spoken to you in very handsome terms of the country round about us, but not so of our house, and the view before it. The house itself, however, is not unworthy some commendation; small as it is, it is neat, and neater than she is aware of; for my study and the room over it have been repaired and beautified this summer, and little more was wanting to make it an abode sufficiently commo-

dious for a man of my moderate desires. As to the prospect from it, that she misrepresented strangely, as I hope soon to have an opportunity to convince her by ocular demonstration. She told you, I know, of certain cottages opposite to us, or rather she described them as poor houses and hovels, that effectually blind our windows. But none such exist. On the contrary, the opposite object, and the only one, is an orchard, so well planted, and with trees of such growth, that we seem to look into a wood, or rather to be surrounded by one. Thus, placed as we are in the midst of a village, we have none of the disagreeables that belong to such a position; and the village itself is one of the prettiest I know; terminated at one end by the church-tower, seen through trees, and at the other by a very handsome gateway, opening into a fine grove of elms, belonging to our neighbour Courteney. How happy should I be to show it instead of describing it to you!

Adieu, my dear friend.

W. C.

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LETTER XC.

To the Reverend Mr. HURDIS.

*Weston, November 24, 1793.*

MY DEAR SIR,

Though my congratulations have been delayed, you have no friend, numerous as your friends are, who has more sincerely rejoiced in your success than I. It was no small mortification to me to find that three of the six whom I had engaged, were not qualified to vote. You have prevailed, however, and by a considerable majority; there is, therefore, no room left for regret. When your short note arrived, which gave me the agreeable news of your victory, our friend of Eartham was with me, and shared largely in the joy that I felt on the occasion. He left me but a few days since, having spent somewhat more than a fortnight here; during which time we employed all our leisure hours in the revisal of his *Life of Milton*. It is now finished, and a very finished work it is; and one that will do great honour, I am persuaded, to the biographer, and the excellent man, of injured memory, who is the subject of it. As to my own concern with the works of this first of poets, which has long been a matter of burthensome contemplation, I have the happiness to find, at last, that I am at liberty to postpone my labours. While I expected that my commentary would be called for in the ensuing spring, I looked forward to the undertaking with dismay, not seeing a shadow of probability that I should be ready to answer the demand: for this ultimate revisal of my *Homer*, together with the notes,

occupies completely at present (and will for some time longer) all the little leisure that I have for study—leisure which I gain at this season of the year, by rising long before day-light.

You are now become a nearer neighbour, and as your professorship, I hope, will not engross you wholly, will find an opportunity to give me your company at Weston. Let me hear from you soon; tell me how you like your new office, and whether you perform the duties of it with pleasure to yourself. With much pleasure to others you will, I doubt not, and with equal advantage.

W. C.

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LETTER XCI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

*Weston, Nov. 29, 1793.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have risen, while the owls are still hooting, to pursue my accustomed labours in the mine of Homer; but before I enter upon them, shall give the first moment of day-light to the purpose of thanking you for your last letter, containing many pleasant articles of intelligence, with nothing to abate the pleasantness of them, except the single circumstance that we are not likely to see you here so soon as I expected. My hope was that the first frost would bring you, and the amiable painter with you: if, however, you are prevented by the business of your respective professions, you are well prevented, and I will endeavour to be patient. When the latter was here, he mentioned, one day, the subject of Diomedes's horses driven under the axle of his chariot, by the thunder-bolt which fell at their feet, as a subject he had settled for his pencil. It is certainly a noble one, and therefore worthy of his study and attention. It occurred to me at the moment, but I know not what it was that made me forget it again the next moment, that the horses of Achilles flying over the foss, with Patroclus and Automedon in the chariot, would be a good companion for it. Should you happen to recollect this when you next see him, you may submit it, if you please, to his consideration. I stumbled yesterday on another subject, which reminded me of said excellent artist, as likely to afford a fine opportunity to the expression that he could give to it. It is found in the shooting-match, in the twenty-third book of the Iliad, between Mariones and Teucer. The former cuts the string with which the dove is tied to the mast-head, and sets her at liberty; the latter, standing at his side, in all the eagerness of emulation, points an arrow at the mark with his right hand, while, with his left, he snatches the bow from his com-



petitor. He is a fine poetical figure: but Mr. Lawrence himself must judge whether or not he promises as well for the canvass.

He does great honour to my physiognomy by his intention to get it engraved; and though I think I foresee that this *private publication* will grow, in time, into a publication of absolute publicity, I find it impossible to be dissatisfied with any thing that seems eligible both to him and you. To say the truth, when a man has once turned his mind inside out, for the inspection of all who choose to inspect it, to make a secret of his face seems but little better than a self-contradiction. At the same time, however, I shall be best pleased if it be kept, according to your intentions, as a rarity.

I have lost Hayley, and begin to be uneasy at not hearing from him: tell me about him when you write.

I should be happy to have a work of mine embellished by Lawrence, and made a companion for a work of Hayley's. It is an event to which I look forward with the utmost complacence. I cannot tell you what a relief I feel it, not to be pressed for Milton.

W. C.

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LETTER XCII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

December 8, 1793.

In my last I forgot to thank you for the box of books, containing also the pamphlets. We have read, that is to say, my cousin has, who reads to us in an evening, the history of Jonathan Wild, and found it highly entertaining. The satire on great men is witty, and, I believe, perfectly just. We have no censure to pass on it, unless that we think the character of Mrs. Hartfree not well sustained; not quite delicate in the latter part of it; and that the constant effect of her charms upon every man who sees her has a sameness in it that is tiresome, and betrays either much carelessness, or idleness, or lack of invention. It is possible, indeed, that the author might intend, by this circumstance, a satirical glance at novelists, whose heroines are generally all bewitching; but it is a fault that he had better have noticed in another manner, and not have exemplified in his own.

The first volume of *Man as he is*, has lain unread in my study window this twelvemonth, and would have been returned unread to its owner, had not my cousin come in good time to save it from that disgrace. We are now reading it, and find it excellent; abounding with wit and just sentiment, and knowledge both of books and men. Adieu.

W. C.



## LETTER XCIII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*December 8, 1793.*

I have waited, and waited impatiently, for a line from you, and am at last determined to send you one, to inquire what is become of you, and why you are silent so much longer than usual.

I want to know many things which only you can tell me, but especially I want to know what has been the issue of your conference with Nichol: has he seen your work? I am impatient for the appearance of it, because impatient to have the spotless credit of the great poet's character, as a man and a citizen, vindicated as it ought to be, and as it never will be again.

It is a great relief to me that my Miltonic labours are suspended. I am now busy in transcribing the alterations of Homer, having finished the whole revisal. I must then write a new preface, which done I shall endeavour immediately to descant on *The four Ages*. Adieu, my dear brother.

W. C.

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The reader may now be anxious to learn some particulars of the projected poem, which has been repeatedly mentioned under the title of "*The four Ages*;" a poem to which the mind of Cowper looked eagerly forward, as to a new and highly promising field for his excursive and benevolent fancy. The idea had been suggested to him in the year 1791, by a very amiable clerical neighbour, Mr. Buchanan, who, in the humble curacy of Ravenstone, (a little sequestered village within a distance of an easy walk from Weston) possesses, in a scene of rustic privacy, such extensive scholarship, such gentleness of manners, and such a contemplative dignity of mind, as would certainly raise him to a more suitable, and, indeed, to a conspicuous situation, if the professional success of a divine were the immediate consequence of exemplary merit. This gentleman, who had occasionally enjoyed the gratification of visiting Cowper, suggested to him, with a becoming diffidence, the project of a new poem on the four distinct periods of life, infancy, youth, manhood, and old age. He imparted his ideas to the poet by a letter, in which he observed, with equal modesty and truth, that Cowper was particularly qualified to relish and to do justice to the subject; a subject which he supposed not hitherto treated expressly, as its importance deserves, by any poet, ancient or modern.

Mr. Buchanan added to this letter a brief sketch of contents for the projected composition. This hasty sketch he enlarged by the kind encouragement of Cowper. How cheerfully the poet received the idea, and how liberally he applauded the worthy divine who suggested it, will appear from the following billet, written immediately on the receipt of the more ample sketch.

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To the Reverend Mr. BUCHANAN.

*Weston, May 11, 1793.*

MY DEAR SIR,

You have sent me a beautiful poem, wanting nothing but metre. I would to heaven that you would give it that requisite yourself; for he who could make the sketch, cannot but be well qualified to finish. But if you will not, I will, provided always, nevertheless, that God gives me ability; for it will require no common share to do justice to your conceptions. I am much yours,

W. C.

Your little messenger vanished before I could catch him.

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Various impediments rendered it hardly possible for Cowper to devote himself as he wished to do to the immediate prosecution of a plan so promising; yet he cherished the idea for some years in his mind, and was particularly pleased (as the reader may recollect from a passage in one of his letters to me) with a prospect that this intended poem might form a portion of a very ample original confederate work, which we hoped to produce in concert with the united powers of some admirable artists, who were justly dear to us both.

All who delight to accompany the genius of Cowper in animated flights of moral contemplation, will deeply regret that he was precluded, by a variety of trouble, from indulging his ardent imagination in a work that would have afforded him such ample scope for all the sweetness and all the sublimity of his spirit. His felicity of description, and his exquisite sensibility; his experience of life, and his sanctity of character, rendered him singularly fit and worthy to delineate the progress of nature in all the different stages of human existence.

A poem of such extent and diversity, happily completed by such a poet, would be a national treasure of infinite value to the country that gave it birth, and I had fervently hoped that England might receive it from the hand of Cowper.

With a regret proportioned to those hopes I now impart to my readers the minute and imperfect fragment of a project so mighty. Yet even the few verses which Cowper had thrown on paper, as the commencement of such a work, will be read with peculiar interest, if there is truth, as I feel there is, in the following remark of the elder Pliny.

“Suprema opera artificum, imperfectasque Tabulus, in majori admiratione esse quam perfecta; Quippe in iis lineamenta reliqua ipsæque cogitationes artificum spectantur, atque in lenocinio commendationis dolor est:—Manus, cum id agerent extinctæ, desiderantur.”

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### THE FOUR AGES.

*A brief Fragment of an extensive projected Poem.*

“I could be well content, allow'd the use  
 “Of past experience, and the wisdom glean'd  
 “From worn-out follies, now acknowledg'd such,  
 “To re-commence life's trial, in the hope  
 “Of fewer errors, on a second proof!”

Thus, while grey evening lull'd the wind, and call'd  
 Fresh odours from the shrubb'ry at my side,  
 Taking my lonely winding walk I mus'd,  
 And held accustom'd conference with my heart;  
 When, from within it, thus a voice replied.

“Could'st thou in truth? and art thou taught at length  
 “This wisdom, and but this from all the past?  
 “Is not the pardon of thy long arrear,  
 “Time wasted, violated laws, abuse  
 “Of talents, judgments, mercies, better far  
 “Than opportunity vouchsaf'd to err  
 “With less excuse, and haply, worse effect?”

I heard, and acquiesced: Then to and fro  
 Oft pacing, as the mariner his deck,  
 My grav'ly bounds, from self to human kind  
 I pass'd, and next consider'd—What is Man?

Knows he his origin?—Can he ascend  
 By reminiscence to his earliest date?

Slept he in Adam? and in those from him  
 Through num'rous generations, till he found,  
 At length, his destin'd moment to be born?  
 Or was he not, till fashion'd in the womb?  
 Deep myst'ries both, which schoolmen must have toil'd  
 To unriddle, and have left them myst'ries still.

It is an evil incident to man,  
 And of the worst, that unexplor'd he leaves  
 Truths useful, and attainable with ease,  
 To search forbidden deeps, where myst'ry lies  
 Not to be solv'd, and useless if it might.  
 Myst'ries are food for Angels; they digest  
 With ease, and find them nutriment; but man,  
 While yet he dwells below, must stoop to glean  
 His manna from the ground, or starve, and die.

It may, in some degree, alleviate the regret which lovers of poetry must feel that this interesting project was never accomplished by Cowper, to be informed that a modern poem on the four Ages of Man was written by M. Werthmuller, a citizen of Zurich, and translated into Latin verse by Dr. Olstrochi, librarian to the Ambrosian library at Milan. This performance gave rise to another German poem on the four Ages of Women, by M. Zacharie, professor of poetry at Brunswick, an elegant little work, that breathes a spirit of tenderness and piety.

The increasing infirmities of Cowper's aged companion, Mrs. Unwin, his filial solicitude to alleviate her sufferings, and the gathering clouds of deeper despondency that began to settle on his mind in the first month of the year 1794, not only rendered it impossible for him to advance in any great original performance, but, to use his own expressive words in the close of his correspondence with his highly valued friend Mr. Rose, made all composition, either of poetry or prose, impracticable. Writing to that friend in January, 1794, he says, "I have just ability enough to transcribe, which is all that I have to do at present: God knows that I write, at this moment, under the pressure of sadness not to be described."

It was a spectacle that might awaken compassion in the sternest of human characters, to see the health, the comfort, and the little fortune of a man so distinguished by intellectual endowments and by moral excellence, perishing most deplorably. A sight so affecting made many friends of Cowper solicitous and importunate that his declining life should be honourably protected by public munifi-

cence. Men of all parties agreed that a pension might be granted to an author of his acknowledged merit with graceful propriety, and we might apply to him, on this topic, the very expressive words which the poet Claudian addresses, on a different occasion, to his favourite hero :

*Suffragia Vulgi*

*Jam tibi detulerant, quidquid mox debuit aula.*

It was devoutly to be wished, that the declining spirits of Cowper should be speedily animated and sustained by assistance of this nature, because the growing influence of melancholy not only filled him with distressing ideas of his own fortune, but threatened to rob him of the power to make any kind of exertion in his own behalf. His situation and his merits were perfectly understood, humanely felt, and honourably acknowledged by persons who, while they declared that he ought to receive an immediate public support, seemed to possess both the inclination and the power to ensure it. But such is the difficulty of doing real good, experienced even by the great and the powerful, or so apt are statesmen to forget the pressing exigence of meritorious individuals, in the distractions of official perplexity, that month after month elapsed, in which the intimate friends of Cowper confidently, yet vainly expected to see him happily rescued from some of the darkest evils impending over him, by an honourable provision for life.

Imagination can hardly devise any human condition more truly affecting than the state of the poet at this period. His generous and faithful guardian, Mrs. Unwin, who had preserved him through seasons of the severest calamity, was now, with her faculties and fortune impaired, sinking fast into second childhood. The distress of heart that he felt in beholding the cruel change in a companion so justly dear to him, conspiring with his constitutional melancholy, was gradually undermining the exquisite faculties of his mind. But deprest as he was by these complicated afflictions, Providence was far from deserting this excellent man. His female relation, whose regard he had cultivated as his favourite correspondent, now devoted herself very nobly to the superintendance of a house, whose two interesting inhabitants were rendered, by age and trouble, almost incapable of attending to the ordinary offices of life.

Those only who have lived with the superannuated and the melancholy, can properly appreciate the value of such magnanimous friendship, or perfectly apprehend what personal sufferings it must cost the mortal who exerts it, if that mortal has received from



nature a frame of compassionate sensibility. The lady to whom I allude has felt but two severely, in her own health, the heavy tax that mortality is forced to pay for a resolute perseverance in such painful duty.

The two last of Cowper's letters to me, that breathe a spirit of mental activity and cheerful friendship, were written in the close of the year 1793 and in the beginning of the next. They arose from an incident that it may be proper to relate before I insert the letters.

On my return from Weston I had given an account of the poet to his old friend Lord Thurlow. That learned and powerful critic, in speaking of Cowper's Homer, happened to declare himself not satisfied with his version of Hector's admirable prayer in caressing his child. We both ventured on new translations of the prayer, which I sent immediately to Cowper, and the following letters will prove with what just and manly freedom of spirit he was at this time able to criticise the composition of his friends and his own.

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#### LETTER XCIV.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*December 17, 1793.*

Oh Jove! and all ye gods! grant this my son  
 To prove, like me, pre-eminent in Troy!  
 In valour such, and firmness of command!  
 Be he extoll'd, when he returns from fight,  
 As far his Sire's superior! may he slay  
 His enemy, bring home his gory spoils,  
 And may his mother's heart o'erflow with joy!

I rose this morning at six o'clock, on purpose to translate this prayer again, and to write to my dear brother. Here you have it, such as it is, not perfectly according to my own liking, but as well as I could make it, and I think better than either your's or Lord Thurlow's. You, with your six lines, have made yourself stiff and ungraceful, and he, with his seven, has produced as good prose as heart can wish, but no poetry at all. A scrupulous attention to the latter has spoiled you both; you have neither the spirit nor the manner of Homer. A portion of both may be found, I believe, in my version, but not so much as I could wish: it is better, however, than the printed one. His Lordship's two first lines I cannot very well understand: he seems to me to give a sense to the original that does not belong to it. Hector, I

apprehend, does not say, "Grant that he may prove himself my son, and be eminent," &c. but, "Grant that this my son may prove eminent;" which is a material difference. In the latter sense I find the simplicity of an ancient; in the former, that is to say, in the notion of a man's proving himself his father's son by similar merit, the finesse and dexterity of a modern. His Lordship, too, makes the man who gives the young hero his commendation the person who returns from battle; whereas Homer makes the young hero himself that person, at least if Clarke is a just interpreter, which I suppose is hardly to be disputed.

If my old friend would look into my preface, he would find a principle laid down there, which, perhaps, it would not be easy to invalidate, and which, properly attended to, would equally secure a translation from stiffness and from wildness. The principle I mean is this: "Close, but not so close as to be servile; free, but not so free as to be licentious." A superstitious fidelity loses the spirit, and a loose deviation the sense of the translated author—a happy moderation, in either case, is the only possible way of preserving both.

Thus have I disciplined you both, and now, if you please, you may both discipline me. I shall not enter my version in my book till it has undergone your strictures at least, and should you write to the noble critic again, you are welcome to submit it to his. We are three awkward fellows indeed, if we cannot amongst us make a tolerable good translation of six lines of Homer. Adieu.

W. C.

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LETTER XCV.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Weston, January 5, 1794.*

MY DEAR HAYLEY,

I have waited, but waited in vain, for a propitious moment when I might give my old friend's objections the consideration they deserve. I shall, at last, be forced to send a vague answer, unworthy to be sent to a person accustomed, like him, to close reasoning and abstruse discussion, for I rise after ill rest, and with a frame of mind perfectly unsuited to the occasion. I sit, too, at the window, for light sake, where I am so cold that my pen slips out of my fingers. First I will give you a translation, de novo, of this untranslatable prayer. It is shaped, as nearly as I could contrive, to his Lordship's ideas, but I have little hope that it will satisfy him.

Grant Jove, and all ye gods, that this, my son,  
 Be, as myself have been, illustrious here!  
 A valiant man! and let him reign in Troy!  
 May all who witness his return from fight  
 Hereafter, say—He far excels his sire;  
 And let him bring back gory trophies, stript  
 From foes slain by him, to his mother's joy.

Imlac, in *Rasselas*, says, I forget to whom, "You have convinced me that it is impossible to be a poet." In like manner I might say to his Lordship, you have convinced me that it is impossible to be a translator. To be a translator, on his terms at least, is, I am sure, impossible. On his terms I would defy Homer himself, were he alive, to translate the *Paradise Lost* into Greek. Yet Milton had Homer much in his eye, when he composed that poem: whereas Homer never thought of me or my translation. There are minutix in every language, which, transfused into another, will spoil the version. Such extreme fidelity is, in fact, unfaithful. Such close resemblance takes away all likeness. The original is elegant, easy, natural; the copy is clumsy, constrained, unnatural. To what is this owing? To the adoption of terms not congenial to your purpose; and of a context, such as no man writing an original work would make use of. Homer is every thing that a poet should be. A translation of Homer so made, will be every thing that a translation of Homer should not be; because it will be written in no language under heaven. It will be English, and it will be Greek, and therefore it will be neither. He is the man, whoever he be, (I do not pretend to be that man myself) he is the man best qualified as a translator of Homer, who has drenched, and steeped, and soaked himself in the effusions of his genius, till he has imbibed their colour to the bone, and who, when he is thus dyed through and through, distinguishing between what is essentially Greek, and what may be habited in English, rejects the former, and is faithful to the latter, as far as the purposes of fine poetry will permit, and no farther. This, I think, may be easily proved. Homer is every where remarkable either for ease, dignity, or energy of expression; for grandeur of conception, and a majestic flow of numbers. If we copy him so closely as to make every one of these excellent properties of his absolutely unattainable, which will certainly be the effect of too close a copy, instead of translating we murder him. Therefore, after all that his Lordship has said, I still hold freedom to be an indispensable. Freedom, I mean, with respect to the expression; freedom so limited, as never to leave behind the *matter*; but at the same time indulged with a

sufficient scope to secure the spirit, and as much as possible of the manner. I say as much as possible, because an English manner must differ from a Greek one, in order to be graceful; and for this there is no remedy. Can an ungraceful, awkward translation of Homer be a good one? No: but a graceful, easy, natural, faithful version of him—will not that be a good one? Yes: allow me but this, and I insist upon it that such a one may be produced on my principles, and can be produced on no other.

I have not had time to criticise his Lordship's other version. You know how little time I have for any thing, and can tell him so.

Adieu, my dear brother. I have now tired both you and myself; and, with the love of the whole trio, remain yours ever,

W. C.

Reading his Lordship's sentiments over again, I am inclined to think, that in all I have said I have only given him back the same in other terms. He disallows both the absolute *free*, and the absolute *close*: so do I; and, if I understand myself, have said so in my preface. He wishes or recommends a medium, though he will not call it so: so do I; only we express it differently. What is it, then, that we dispute about? My head is not good enough to-day to discover.

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These letters were followed by such a silence on the part of my invaluable correspondent, as filled me with the severest apprehensions: because I well knew that, while he retained any glimmerings of mental health, his affectionate spirit was eager to unburthen itself to a friend, of whose sympathy, in all his sufferings, he was perfectly assured. The accounts of him with which I was favoured by his amiable relation (who, shocked as she was by the helpless state and deplorable infirmities of Mrs. Unwin, now resided with these piteous invalids,) increased my anxiety for my dejected and silent friend.

Little as the probability appeared that my presence could render him any essential service, I was induced to visit Weston once more, by the following friendly exhortation, in a letter from Cowper's compassionate neighbour, Mr. Greatehead—the clergyman whom Cowper himself had taught me to esteem on our first acquaintance.



From the Reverend Mr. GREATHEED,

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

*Newport-Pagnel, April 8, 1794.*

DEAR SIR,

Lady Hesketh's correspondence acquainted you with the melancholy relapse of our dear friend at Weston; but I am uncertain whether you know that, in the last fortnight, he has refused food of every kind, except now and then a very small piece of toasted bread, dipped generally in water, sometimes mixed with a little wine. This, her Ladyship informs me, was the case till last Saturday, since when he has eat a little at each family meal. He persists in refusing such medicines as are indispensable to his state of body. In such circumstances, his long continuance in life cannot be expected. How devoutly to be wished is the alleviation of his danger and distress! You, dear Sir, who know so well the worth of our beloved and admired friend, sympathize with his affliction, and deprecate his loss, doubtless, in no ordinary degree. You have already most effectually expressed and proved the warmth of your friendship. I cannot think that any thing but your society would have been sufficient, during the infirmity under which his mind has long been oppressed, to have supported him against the shock of Mrs. Unwin's paralytic attack. I am certain that nothing else could have prevailed upon him to undertake the journey to Eartham. You have succeeded where his other friends knew they could not, and where they apprehended no one could. How natural, therefore, nay, how reasonable is it for them to look to you, as most likely to be instrumental, under the blessing of God, for relief in the present distressing and alarming crisis? It is, indeed, scarcely attemptable to ask any person to take such a journey, and involve himself in so melancholy a scene, with an uncertainty of the desired success—increased as the apparent difficulty is by dear Mr. Cowper's aversion to all company, and by poor Mrs. Unwin's mental and bodily infirmities. On these accounts Lady Hesketh dares not ask it of you, rejoiced as she would be at your arrival. Am not I, dear Sir, a very presumptuous person, who, in the face of all opposition, dare do this? I am emboldened by those two powerful supporters, conscience and experience. Was I at Eartham, I would certainly undertake the labour I presume to recommend, for the bare possibility of restoring Mr. Cowper to himself, to his friends, to the public, and to God.



The benevolent wishes of this sincere and fervent advocate for genius and virtue, sinking under calamity, were far from being accomplished by my arrival at Weston. My unhappy friend was too much overwhelmed by his oppressive malady, to show even the least glimmering of satisfaction at the appearance of a guest whom he used to receive with the most lively expressions of affectionate delight.

It is the nature of this tremendous melancholy not only to enshroud and stifle the finest faculties of the mind, but it suspends, and apparently annihilates for a time, the strongest and best-rooted affections of the heart. I had frequent and painful occasion to observe, in this affecting visit to my suffering friend, that he seemed to shrink, at times, from every human creature, except from the gentle voice of my son.

This exception I attributed partly to the peculiar charm which is generally found in the manners of tender ingenuous children, and partly to that uncommon sweetness of character which had inspired Cowper with a degree of parental partiality towards this highly promising youth.

I had hoped, indeed, that his influence, at this season, might be superior to my own, over the dejected spirit of my friend; but though it was so to a considerable degree, our united efforts to cheer and amuse him were utterly frustrated by his calamitous depression.

I may yet hope that my distressing visit to this very dear sufferer was productive of some little good. My presence afforded an opportunity to his excellent relation, Lady Hesketh, who acted at this time as his immediate guardian, to quit her charge for a few days, that she might have a personal conference concerning him with the eminent Dr. Willis. A friendly letter from Lord Thurlow to that celebrated physician had requested his attention to the highly interesting sufferer. Dr. Willis prescribed for Cowper, and saw him at Weston; but not with that success and felicity which made his medical skill, on another most awful occasion, the source of national delight and exultation.

Indeed, the extraordinary state of Cowper appeared to abound with circumstances very unfavourable to his mental relief. The daily sight of a being reduced to such deplorable imbecility as now overwhelmed Mrs. Unwin was, in itself, sufficient to plunge a tender spirit in extreme melancholy; yet to separate two friends so long accustomed to minister, with the purest and most vigilant benevolence, to the infirmities of each other, was a measure so pregnant with complicated distraction, that it could not be advised or attempted. It remained only to palliate the sufferings of each,

in their present most pitiable condition, and to trust in the mercy of that God who had supported them together through periods of very dark affliction, though not so doubly deplorable as the present.

I had formerly regarded Weston as a scene that exhibited human nature in a most delightful point of view: I had applauded there no common triumphs of genius and of friendship. The contrast that I now contemplated has often led me to repeat (with such feelings as those only who have surveyed a contrast so deplorable can perfectly conceive) the following pathetic exclamation in the Sampson Agonistes of Milton:

“ God of our Fathers, what is man !

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Since such as Thou hast solemnly elected,

“ With gifts and graces eminently adorned ;

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Yet towards these thus dignified, Thou oft,

“ Amidst their height of noon,

“ Changest thy count'nance, and thy hand, with no regard

“ Of highest favours past

“ From Thee on them, or them to Thee of service.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ So deal not with this once thy glorious champion !

“ What do I beg? How hast thou dealt already !

“ Behold him in this state calamitous, and turn

“ His labours, for thou canst, to peaceful end !”

In the spirit of this prayer every being sympathized who had enjoyed a personal acquaintance with Cowper in his happier days, or felt the beneficent influence of his unclouded mind. But, for reasons inscrutable to human apprehension, it was the will of Heaven that this admirable and meritorious invalid should pass through a length of sufferings, on which I am very far from being disposed to detain the attention of my reader:

“ Animus meminisse horret, luctuque refugit.”

I shall therefore only say, that although it has been my lot to be acquainted with affliction in a variety of shapes, I hardly ever felt the anguish of sympathy with an afflicted friend in a severer degree than during the few weeks that I passed with Cowper at this season of his sufferings. The pain that I endured from this sympathy was, I believe, very visible in my features, and it obtained

for me, from his excellent, accomplished neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Courteney, the most delicate and endearing attention; kindness so peculiarly consoling, that I can never cease to remember, and to speak of it with gratitude, while the faculty of memory remains to me.

Indeed, as my own health had been much shattered by a series of troubles, it would probably have sunk utterly under the pressure of this distressing scene, had not some comforts of a very soothing nature been providentially blended with the calamities of my friend.

It was on the twenty-third of April, 1794, in one of those melancholy mornings when his compassionate relation, Lady Hesketh, and myself, were watching together over this dejected sufferer, that a letter from Lord Spencer arrived at Weston, to announce the intended grant of such a pension from his Majesty to Cowper, as would ensure an honourable competence for the residue of his life. This intelligence produced in the friends of the poet very lively emotions of delight, yet blended with pain almost as powerful; for it was painful, in no trifling degree, to reflect, that these desirable smiles of good fortune could not impart even a faint glimmering of joy to the dejected invalid.

His friends, however, had the animating hope, that a day would arrive when they might see him receive, with a cheerful and joyful gratitude, this royal recompence for merit universally acknowledged. They knew that, when he recovered his suspended faculties, he must be particularly pleased to find himself chiefly indebted for his good fortune to the active benevolence of that nobleman who, though not personally acquainted with Cowper, stood, of all his noble friends, the highest in his esteem.

Indeed, it is a justice due to the great to declare, that many of them concurred in promoting, on this occasion, the interest of the poet; and they spoke of him with a truth, and liberality of praise, that did honour both to him and to themselves. It is not often that Majesty has opportunities of granting a reward for literary merit, where the individual who receives it has so clear and unquestionable a title, both to royal munificence and to popular affection. But the heart and spirit of Cowper were eminently loyal and patriotic. He has spoken occasionally of his sovereign in verse, with personal regard, but without a shadow of servility: and his poetry abounds with eloquent and just descriptions of that double duty which an Englishman owes to the crown and to the people.

Perhaps no poet has more clearly and forcibly delineated the respective duties that belong both to subjects and to sovereigns: I allude to an admirable passage on this topic in the fifth book of

the Task. It is time to return to the sufferer at Weston. He was unhappily disabled from feeling the favour he received, but an annuity of three hundred a year was graciously secured to him, and rendered payable to his friend Mr. Rose, as the trustee of Cowper.

After devoting a few weeks to Weston, I was under a painful necessity of forcing myself away from my unhappy friend, who, though he appeared to take no pleasure in my society, expressed extreme reluctance to let me depart. I hardly ever endured an hour more dreadfully distressing than the hour in which I left him. Yet the anguish of it would have been greatly increased, had I been conscious that he was destined to years of this dark depression, and that I should see him no more. I still hoped, from the native vigour of his frame, that, as he had formerly struggled through longer fits of this oppressive malady, his darkened mind would yet emerge from this calamitous eclipse, and shine forth again with new lustre. These hopes were considerably increased at a subsequent period; but, alas! they were delusive: for, although he recovered sufficient command of his faculties to write a few occasional poems, and to retouch his Homer, yet the prospect of his perfect recovery was never realized. I had beheld the poet of unrivalled genius, the sympathetic friend, and the delightful companion, for the last time; and I must now relate the gloomy residue of his life, not from my own personal observation, but from the faithful account of his young kinsman of Norfolk, who devoted himself to the care of this beloved sufferer, and persevered to the last in that delicate and awful charge.

From this time, when I left my unhappy friend at Weston, in the spring of the year 1794, he remained there, under the tender vigilance of his affectionate relation, Lady Hesketh, till the latter end of July, 1795; a long season of the darkest depression, in which the best medical advice, and the influence of time, appeared equally unable to lighten that afflictive burthen which pressed incessantly on his spirits.

At this period it became absolutely necessary to make a great and painful exertion, for the mental relief of the various sufferers at Weston. Mrs. Unwin was sinking very fast into second childhood; the health of Lady Hesketh was much impaired; and the dejection of Cowper was so severe, that a change of scene was considered as essential to the preservation of his life.

Under circumstances so deplorable, his kinsman at Norfolk most tenderly and generously undertook to conduct the two venerable invalids from Buckinghamshire into Norfolk, and so to regulate their future lives, that every possible expedient might be tried for the recovery of his revered relation.



It is hardly possible for friendship to undertake a charge more delicate and arduous, or to sustain all the pains that must necessarily attend it, with a more constant exertion of gentle fortitude and affectionate fidelity.

The local attachment of Cowper to his favourite village of Weston was strong in no common degree, and rendered his migration from it, though an event of medical necessity, yet a scene of peculiar sufferings. Those who knew his passionate attachment to that pleasant village, how deeply he lamented his absence from it, and how little he gained by a change of situation, though considered as important to the revival of his health, can hardly help regretting that he did not close his days in that favourite scene, and find, at last, according to the wish that he tenderly expresses in the conclusion of the *Task*,

“ A safe retreat  
“ Beneath the turf that he had often trod.”

But painful and unprofitable as it proved in a medical point of view, his removal from Weston was very properly considered, by his relations, as an act of imperious duty. He quitted it with affectionate reluctance ; and perhaps I cannot more forcibly express both the regard of Cowper, and my own regard for that endearing scene, than by introducing, at this time, when we are taking leave of Weston for ever, a little poem, that I believe to be the last original work which he produced in that beloved abode. The poem describes not his residence, but the increasing infirmities of that aged companion who had so long contributed to his domestic comfort. I question if any language on earth can exhibit a specimen of verse more exquisitely tender.

#### TO MARY.

The twentieth year is well-nigh past,  
Since first our sky was overcast—  
Ah, would that this might be the last,  
My Mary !

Thy spirits have a fainter flow,  
I see thee daily weaker grow—  
’Twas my distress that brought thee low,  
My Mary !



Thy needles, once a shining store,  
 For my sake restless heretofore,  
 Now rust disus'd, and shine no more,  
 My Mary!

For though thou gladly would'st fulfil  
 The same kind office for me still,  
 Thy sight now seconds not thy will,  
 My Mary!

But well thou playd'st the housewife's part;  
 And all thy threads, with magic art,  
 Have wound themselves about this heart,  
 My Mary!

Thy indistinct expressions seem  
 Like language utter'd in a dream;  
 Yet me they charm, whate'er the theme,  
 My Mary!

Thy silver locks, once auburn bright,  
 Are still more lovely in my sight  
 Than golden beams of orient light,  
 My Mary!

For could I view nor them nor thee,  
 What sight worth seeing could I see?  
 The sun would rise in vain for me,  
 My Mary!

Partakers of thy sad decline,  
 Thy hands their little force resign;  
 Yet, gently press'd, press gently mine,  
 My Mary!

Such feebleness of limbs thou prov'st,  
 That now, at every step thou mov'st  
 Upheld by two, yet still thou lov'st,  
 My Mary!

And still to love, though prest with ill;  
 In wint'ry age to feel no chill,  
 With me, is to be lovely still,  
 My Mary!

But ah! by constant heed I know  
 How oft the sadness that I show  
 Transforms thy smiles to looks of woe,  
My Mary!

And should my future lot be cast  
 With much resemblance of the past,  
 Thy worn-out heart will break at last,  
My Mary!

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On Tuesday the twenty-eighth of July, 1795, Cowper and Mrs. Unwin removed, under the care and guidance of Mr. Johnson, from Weston to North-Tuddenham, in Norfolk, by a journey of three days, passing through Cambridge without stopping there. In the evening of the first day they rested at the village of Eaton, near St. Neot's. Cowper walked, with his young kinsman, in the church-yard, by moon-light, and spoke of the poet Thomson with more composure of mind than he had discovered for many months.

This conversation was almost his last glimmering of cheerfulness.

At North-Tuddenham the travellers were accommodated with a commodious, untenanted parsonage-house, by the kindness of the Reverend Leonard Shelford. Here they resided till the nineteenth of August. It was the considerate intention of Mr. Johnson not to remove the two invalids immediately to his own house in the town of East-Dereham, lest the situation, in a market-place, should be distressing to the tender spirits of Cowper.

In their new temporary residence they were received by Miss Johnson and Miss Perowne: and here I am irresistibly led to remark the kindness of Providence towards Cowper, in his darkest seasons of calamity, by supplying him with attendants peculiarly suited to the exigences of mental dejection.

Miss Perowne is one of those excellent beings whom nature seems to have formed expressly for the purpose of alleviating the sufferings of the afflicted: tenderly vigilant in providing for the wants of sickness, and resolutely firm in administering such relief as the most intelligent compassion can supply. Cowper speedily observed and felt the invaluable virtues of his new attendant; and, during the last years of his life, he honoured her so far as to prefer her personal assistance to that of every individual around him.

Severe as his depressive malady appeared at this period, he was still able to bear considerable exercise; and before he left Tuddenham, he walked, with Mr. Johnson, to the neighbouring village of

Mattishall, on a visit to his cousin, Mrs. Bodham. On surveying his own portrait by Abbot, in the house of that lady, he clasped his hands in a paroxysm of pain, and uttered a vehement wish, that his present sensations might be such as they were when that picture was painted. In August, 1795, Mr. Johnson conducted his two invalids to Mundsley, a village on the Norfolk coast, in the hope that a situation by the sea-side might prove salutary and amusing to Cowper. They continued to reside there till October, but without any apparent benefit to the health of the interesting sufferer.

He had long relinquished epistolary intercourse with his most intimate friends, but his tender solicitude to hear some tidings of his favourite Weston induced him, in September, to write a letter to Mr. Buchanan. It shows the severity of his depression, but shows, also, that faint gleams of pleasure could occasionally break through the settled darkness of melancholy.

He begins with a poetical quotation:

‘ To interpose a little ease,

‘ Let my frail thoughts dally with false surmise!’

“ I will forget, for a moment, that to whomsoever I may address myself, a letter from me can no otherwise be welcome than as a curiosity. To you, Sir, I address this, urged to it by extreme penury of employment, and the desire I feel to learn something of what is doing, and has been done, at Weston (my beloved Weston!) since I left it.

“ The coldness of these blasts, even in the hottest days, has been such, that, added to the irritation of the salt-spray with which they are always charged, they have occasioned me an inflammation in the eye-lids, which threatened, a few days since, to confine me entirely; but, by absenting myself as much as possible from the beach, and guarding my face with an umbrella, that inconvenience is, in some degree, abated. My chamber commands a very near view of the ocean, and the ships at high water approach the coast so closely, that a man, furnished with better eyes than mine, might, I doubt not, discern the sailors from the window. No situation, at least when the weather is clear and bright, can be pleasanter; which you will easily credit, when I add, that it imparts something a little resembling pleasure even to me.—Gratify me with news of Weston!—If Mr. Gregson and your neighbours, the Courtenays, are there, mention me to them in such terms as you see good. Tell me if my poor birds are living! I never see the herbs I used to give them without

a recollection of them, and sometimes am ready to gather them, forgetting that I am not at home.—Pardon this intrusion!

“Mrs. Unwin continues much as usual.

“*Mundsley, Sept. 5, 1795.*”

The compassionate and accomplished clergyman to whom this letter is addressed, endeavoured, with great tenderness and ingenuity, to allure his dejected friend to prolong a correspondence that seemed to promise some little alleviation to his melancholy: but that cruel distemper baffled all the various expedients that could be devised to counteract its overwhelming influence.

Much hope was entertained from air and exercise, with a frequent change of scene.—In September Mr. Johnson conducted his kinsman (to the promotion of whose recovery he devoted all the faculties of his affectionate spirit) to take a survey of Dunham-Lodge, a seat that happened to be vacant: it is seated on a high ground, in a park, about four miles from Swaffham. Cowper spoke of it as a house rather too spacious for him, yet such as he was not unwilling to inhabit; a remark that induced Mr. Johnson, at a subsequent period, to become the tenant of this mansion, as a scene more eligible for Cowper than the town of Dereham. This town they also surveyed in their excursion; and, after passing a night there, returned to Mundsley, which they quitted for the season on the seventh of October.

They removed immediately to Dereham; but left it in the course of the month for Dunham-Lodge, which now became their settled residence.

The spirits of Cowper were not sufficiently revived to allow him to resume either his pen or his books; but the kindness of his young kinsman continued to furnish him with inexhaustible amusement, by reading to him, almost incessantly, a series of novels, which, although they did not lead him to converse on what he heard, yet failed not to rivet his attention, and so to prevent his afflicted mind from preying on itself.

In April, 1796, the good, infirm old lady, whose infirmities continued to engage the tender attention of Cowper, even in his darkest periods of depression, received a visit from her daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Powley. On their departure, Mr. Johnson assumed the office which Mrs. Powley had tenderly performed for her venerable parent, and regularly read a chapter in the Bible every morning to Mrs. Unwin before she rose. It was the invariable custom of Cowper to visit his poor old friend the



moment he had finished his breakfast, and to remain in her apartment while the chapter was read.

In June the pressure of his melancholy appeared to be in some little degree alleviated, for on Mr. Johnson's receiving the edition of Pope's Homer, published by Mr. Wakefield, Cowper eagerly seized the book, and began to read the notes to himself with visible interest. They awakened his attention to his own version of Homer. In August he deliberately engaged in a revisal of the whole, and for some time produced almost sixty new lines a day.

This mental occupation animated all his intimate friends with a most lively hope of his speedy and perfect recovery. But autumn repressed the hope that summer had excited.

In September the family removed from Dunham-Lodge to try again the influence of the sea-side, in their favourite village of Mundsley.

Cowper walked frequently by the sea; but no apparent benefit arose, no mild relief from the incessant pressure of his melancholy. He had relinquished his Homer again, and could not yet be induced to resume it.

Towards the end of October, this interesting family of disabled invalids, and their affectionate attendants, retired from the coast to the house of Mr. Johnson, in Dereham; a house now chosen for their winter residence, as Dunham-Lodge appeared to them too dreary.

The long and exemplary life of Mrs. Unwin was drawing towards a close:—The powers of nature were gradually exhausted, and on the seventeenth of December she ended a troubled existence, distinguished by a sublime spirit of piety and friendship, that shone through long periods of calamity, and continued to glimmer through the distressful twilight of her declining faculties. Her death was uncommonly tranquil. Cowper saw her about half an hour before the moment of expiration, which passed, without a struggle or a groan, as the clock was striking one in the afternoon.

On the morning of that day he said to the servant, who opened the window of his chamber, "Sally, is there life above stairs?" A striking proof of his bestowing incessant attention on the sufferings of his aged friend, although he had long appeared almost totally absorbed in his own.

In the dusk of the evening he attended Mr. Johnson to survey the corpse; and after looking at it a few moments, he started suddenly away, with a vehement but unfinished sentence of passionate sorrow.

He spoke of her no more.



She was buried by torch-light, on the twenty-third of December, in the north aisle of Dereham church; and two of her friends, impressed with a just and deep sense of her extraordinary merit, have raised a marble tablet to her memory, with the following inscription:

## IN MEMORY OF

*MARY,*

(Widow of the Reverend MORLEY UNWIN,  
and Mother of the Reverend WILLIAM CAWTHORN UNWIN,)

Born at Ely, 1724—buried in this Church, 1796.

Trusting in God, with all her heart and mind,  
This woman prov'd magnanimously kind;  
Endur'd affliction's desolating hail,  
And watch'd a poet through misfortune's vale.  
Her spotless dust, angelic guards, defend!  
It is the dust of Unwin, Cowper's friend!  
That single title in itself is fame,  
For all who read his verse revere her name.

The infinitely tender and deep sense of gratitude that Cowper, in his seasons of health, invariably manifested towards this zealous and faithful guardian of his troubled existence; the agonies he suffered on our finding her under the oppression of a paralytic disease, during my first visit to Weston; and all his expressions to me concerning the comfort and support that his spirits had derived from her friendship,—all made me peculiarly anxious to know how he sustained the event of her death. It may be regarded as an instance of providential mercy to this afflicted poet, whose sensibility of heart was so wonderfully acute, that his aged friend, whose life he had so long considered as essential to his own, was taken from him at a time when the pressure of his malady, a perpetual low fever, both of body and mind, had, in a great degree, diminished the native energy of his faculties and affections.

Severe as the sufferings of melancholy were to his disordered frame, I am strongly inclined to believe that the anguish of heart which he would otherwise have endured, must have been infinitely more severe. From this anguish he was so far preserved by the marvellous state of his own disturbed health, that, instead of mourning the loss of a person in whose life he had seemed to live, all perception of that loss was mercifully taken from him; and

from the moment when he hurried away from the inanimate object of his filial attachment, he appeared to have no memory of her having existed, for he never asked a question concerning her funeral, nor ever mentioned her name.

Towards the summer of 1797, his bodily health appeared to improve, but not to such a degree as to restore any comfortable activity to his mind. In June he wrote to me a brief letter, but such as too forcibly expressed the cruelty of his distemper.

The process of digestion never passed regularly in his frame during the years that he resided in Norfolk. Medicine appeared to have little or no influence on his complaint, and his aversion at the sight of it was extreme.

From Asses' milk, of which he began a course on the twenty-first of June in this year, he gained a considerable acquisition of bodily strength, and was enabled to bear an airing in an open carriage before breakfast, with Mr. Johnson.

A depression of spirits, which suspended the studies of a writer so eminently endeared to the public, was considered, by men of piety and learning, as a national misfortune; and several individuals of this description, though personally unknown to Cowper, wrote to him in the benevolent hope, that expressions of friendly praise, from persons who could be influenced only by the most laudable motives in bestowing it, might reanimate the dejected spirit of a poet, not sufficiently conscious of the public service that his writings had rendered to his country, and of that universal esteem which they had so deservedly secured to their author.

I cannot think myself authorized to mention the names of all who did honour to Cowper and to themselves on this occasion, but I trust the Bishop of Landaff will forgive me, if my sentiments of personal regard towards him induce me to take an affectionate liberty with his name, and to gratify myself by recording, in these pages, a very pleasing example of his liberal attention to the interests of humanity.

He endeavoured evangelically to cheer and invigorate the mind of Cowper; but the depression of that disordered mind was the effect of bodily disorder so obstinate, that it received not the slightest relief from what, in a season of corporeal health, would have afforded the most animated gratification to this interesting invalid.

The pressure of his malady had now made him utterly deaf to the most honourable praise.

He had long discontinued the revision of his Homer; but, by the entreaty of his young kinsman, he was persuaded to resume it in September, 1797, and he persevered in it, oppressed as he was

by indisposition, till March, 1799. On Friday evening, the eighth of that month, he completed his revisal of the *Odyssey*, and the next morning wrote part of a new preface.

To watch over the disordered health of afflicted genius, and to lead a powerful but oppressed spirit, by gentle encouragement, to exert itself in salutary occupation, is an office that requires a very rare union of tenderness, intelligence and fortitude. To contemplate and minister to a great mind, in a state that borders on mental desolation, is like surveying, in the midst of a desert, the tottering ruins of palaces and temples, where the faculties of the spectator are almost absorbed in wonder and regret, and where every step is taken with awful apprehension.

It seemed as if Providence had expressly formed the young kinsman of Cowper to prove exactly such a guardian to his declining years as the peculiar exigencies of his situation required. I never saw the human being that could, I think, have sustained the delicate and arduous office (in which the inexhaustible virtues of Mr. Johnson persevered to the last) through a period so long, with an equal portion of unvaried tenderness and unshaken fidelity. A man who wanted sensibility would have renounced the duty; and a man endowed with a particle too much of that valuable, though perilous quality, must have felt his own health utterly undermined by an excess of sympathy with the sufferings perpetually in his sight. Mr. Johnson has completely discharged perhaps the most trying of human duties; and, I trust, he will forgive me for this public declaration, that, in his mode of discharging it, he has merited the most cordial esteem from all who love the memory of Cowper. Even a stranger may consider it as a striking proof of his tender dexterity in soothing and guiding the afflicted poet, that he was able to engage him steadily to pursue and finish the revisal and correction of his *Homer*, during a long period of bodily and mental sufferings, when his troubled mind recoiled from all intercourse with his most intimate friends, and laboured under a morbid abhorrence of all cheerful exertion.

But in deploring the calamity of my friend, and describing the merit of his affectionate attendant, I must not forget that it is still incumbent on me, as a faithful biographer, to notice a few circumstances in the dark and distressful years that Cowper had yet to linger on earth. In the summer of 1798, Mr. Johnson was induced to vary his plan of remaining, for some months, in the marine village of Mundsley, and thought it more eligible for the invalid to make frequent visits from Dereham to the coast, passing a week at a time by the sea-side.

Cowper, in his *Poem on Retirement*, seems to inform us what

his own sentiments were, in a season of health, concerning the regimen most proper for the disease of melancholy.

“ Virtuous and faithful Heberden, whose skill  
 “ Attempts no task it cannot well fulfil,  
 “ Gives melancholy up to nature’s care,  
 “ And sends the patient into purer air.”

The frequent change of place, and the magnificence of marine scenery, produced, at times, a little relief to his depressive sensations. On the seventh of June, 1798, he surveyed the Light-house at Happisburgh, and expressed some pleasure on beholding, through a telescope, several ships at a distance. Yet, in his usual walk with Mr. Johnson, by the sea-side, he exemplified but too forcibly his own affecting description of melancholy silence.

“ That silent tongue  
 “ Could give advice, could censure, or commend,  
 “ Or charm the sorrows of a drooping friend ;  
 “ Rencunc’d alike its office, and its sport,  
 “ Its brisker and its graver strains fall short :  
 “ Both fai’ beneath a fever’s secret sway,  
 “ And, like a summer brook, are past away.”

But this description is applicable only in the more oppressive preceding years, for of the summer 1798, Mr. Johnson says, “ We had no longer air and exercise alone, but exercise and Homer hand in hand.”

On the twenty-fourth of July Cowper had the honour of a visit from a lady for whom he had long entertained affectionate respect, the Dowager Lady Spencer ; and it was rather remarkable, that, on the very morning she called upon him, he happened to have begun his revisal of the *Odyssey*, which he had originally inscribed to her. Such an incident, in an happier season, would have produced a very enlivening effect on his spirits ; but, in his present state, it had not even the power to lead him into any free conversation with his amiable visitor.

The only amusement that he appeared to admit without reluctance, was the reading of Mr. Johnson, who, indefatigable in the supply of such amusement, had exhausted an immense collection of novels ; and, at this period, began reading to the poet his own works. To these he listened also in silence, and heard all his poems recited in order, till the reader arrived at the history of John Gilpin, which he begged not to hear. Mr. Johnson proceeded



to his manuscript poems. To these he willingly listened, but made not a single remark on any. In October, 1798, the pressure of his melancholy seemed to be mitigated in some little degree, for he exerted himself so far as to write, without solicitation, to Lady Hesketh; and I insert passages of this letter, because, gloomy as it is, it describes, in a most interesting manner, the sudden attack of his malady, and tends to confirm an opinion that his mental disorder arose from a scorbutic habit, which, when his perspiration was obstructed, occasioned an unsearchable obstruction in the finer parts of his frame. Such a cause would produce, I apprehend, an effect exactly like what my suffering friend describes in this affecting letter.

DEAR COUSIN,

You describe delightful scenes, but you describe them to one who, if he even saw them, could receive no delight from them; who has a faint recollection, and so faint as to be like an almost forgotten dream, that once he was susceptible of pleasure from such causes. The country that you have had in prospect has been always famed for its beauties; but the wretch who can derive no gratification from a view of nature, even under the disadvantage of her most ordinary dress, will have no eyes to admire her in any.

In one day, in one minute, I should rather have said, she became an universal blank to me, and though from a different cause, yet with an effect as difficult to remove as blindness itself.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Mundsley, October 13, 1798.*

On his return from Mundsley to Dereham, in an evening towards the end of October, Cowper, with Miss Perowne and Mr. Johnson, was overturned in a post-chaise. He discovered no terror on the occasion, and escaped without injury from the accident.

In December he received a visit from his highly esteemed friend Sir John Throckmorton; but his malady was, at that time, so oppressive that it rendered him almost insensible to the kind solicitude of friendship.

He still continued to exercise the powers of his astonishing mind. Upon his finishing the revisal of his Homer, in March, 1799, Mr. Johnson endeavoured, in the gentlest manner, to lead him into new literary occupation.

For this purpose, on the eleventh of March, he had before him the paper, containing the commencement of his poem on *The*



*four Ages.* Cowper altered a few lines; he also added a few; but soon observed to his kind attendant, "that it was too great a work for him to attempt in his present situation."

At supper, Mr. Johnson suggested to him several literary projects, that he might execute more easily. He replied, "that he had just thought of six Latin verses, and if he could compose any thing, it must be in pursuing that composition."

The next morning he wrote the six verses he had mentioned, and added a few more, entitling the poem, "*Montes glaciales.*"

It proved a versification of a circumstance recorded in a newspaper, which had been read to him a few weeks before, without his appearing to notice it. This poem he translated into English verse, on the nineteenth of March, to oblige Miss Perowne. Both the original and the translation shall appear in the Appendix.

On the twentieth of March he wrote the stanzas, entitled, *The Cast-away*, founded on an anecdote in Anson's voyage, which his memory suggested to him, although he had not looked into the book for many years.

As this poem is the last original production from the pen of Cowper, I shall introduce it here, persuaded that it will be read with an interest proportioned to the extraordinary pathos of the subject, and the still more extraordinary powers of the poet, whose lyre could sound so forcibly, unsilenced by the gloom of the darkest distemper, that was conducting him, by slow gradations, to the shadow of death.

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### THE CAST-AWAY.

Obscurest night invol'd the sky;  
 Th' Atalantic billows roar'd;  
 When such a destin'd wretch as I,  
 Wash'd headlong from on board,  
 Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,  
 His floating home for ever left.

No braver chief could Albion boast  
 Than he with whom he went,  
 Nor ever ship left Albion's coast,  
 With warmer wishes sent.  
 He lov'd them both, but both in vain,  
 Nor him beheld, nor her again.

Not long beneath the 'whelming brine,  
 Expert to swim, he lay ;  
 Nor soon he felt his strength decline,  
 Or courage die away ;  
 But wag'd with death a lasting strife,  
 Supported by despair of life.

He shouted: nor his friends had fail'd  
 To check the vessel's course,  
 But so the furious blast prevail'd,  
 That, pitiless perforce,  
 They left their out-cast mate behind,  
 And scudded still before the wind.

Some succour yet they could afford ;  
 And, such as storms allow,  
 The cask, the coop, the floated cord  
 Delay'd not to bestow.  
 But he, they knew, nor ship, nor shore,  
 Whate'er they gave, should visit more.

Nor, cruel as it seem'd, could he  
 Their haste himself condemn,  
 Aware that flight, in such a sea,  
 Alone could rescue them ;  
 Yet bitter felt it still to die  
 Deserted, and his friends so nigh.

He long survives, who lives an hour  
 In ocean, self-upheld :  
 And so long he, with unspent pow'r,  
 His destiny repell'd :  
 And ever as the minutes flew,  
 Entreated help, or cry'd—" Adieu !"

At length, his transient respite past,  
 His comrades, who before  
 Had heard his voice in ev'ry blast,  
 Could catch the sound no more.  
 For then, by toil subdued, he drank  
 The stifling wave, and then he sank,

No poet wept him: but the page  
 Of narrative sincere,  
 That tells his name, his worth, his age,  
 Is wet with Anson's tear.  
 And tears, by bards or heroes shed,  
 Alike immortalise the dead.

I therefore purpose not, or dream,  
 Descanting on his fate,  
 To give the melancholy theme  
 A more enduring date.  
 But misery still delights to trace  
 Its 'semblance in another's case.

No voice divine the storm allay'd,  
 No light propitious shone;  
 When, snatch'd from all effectual aid,  
 We perish'd, each alone;  
 But I beneath a rougher sea,  
 And whelm'd in deeper gulphs than he.

---

In August he translated this poem into Latin verse. In October he went, with Miss Perowne and Mr. Johnson, to survey a larger house in Dereham, which he preferred to their present residence, and in which the family were settled in the following December.

Though his corporeal strength was now evidently declining, the tender persuasion of Mr. Johnson induced him to amuse his mind with frequent composition. Between August and December he wrote all the translations, from various Latin and Greek epigrams, which the reader will find in the appendix.

In his new residence he amused himself with translating a few fables of Gay into Latin verse. The fable which he used to recite as a child, "The hare and many friends," became one of his latest amusements.

The perfect ease and spirit with which his translations from Gay are written, induce me to print not only those which he left entire, but even the two verses (for they are excellent) with which he was beginning to translate another, when increasing maladies obliged him to relinquish for ever this elegant occupation.

These Latin fables were all written in January, 1800. Towards the end of that month I had requested him to new-model a passage in his Homer, relating to some figures of Dædalus: on the thirty-

first of January I received from him his improved version of the lines in question, written in a firm and delicate hand.

The sight of such writing from my long silent friend inspired me with a lively but too sanguine hope, that I might see him once more restored.

Alas! at this period a complication of new maladies began to threaten his inestimable life; and the neat transcript of his improved verses on the curious monument of ancient sculpture, so gracefully described by Homer, verses which I surveyed as a delightful omen of future letters from a correspondent so inexpressibly dear to me, proved the last effort of his pen.

On the very day that this endearing mark of his kindness reached me, a dropsical appearance in his legs induced Mr. Johnson to have recourse to fresh medical assistance. The beloved invalid was, with great difficulty, persuaded to take the remedies prescribed, and to try the exercise of a post-chaise, an exercise which he could not bear beyond the twenty-second of February.

In March, when his decline became more and more striking, he was visited by Mr. Rose. He hardly expressed any pleasure on the arrival of a friend whom he had so long and so tenderly regarded; yet he showed evident signs of regret on his departure, the sixth of April.

The long calamitous illness and impending death of a darling child precluded me from sharing with Mr. Rose the painful gratification of seeing, once more, the man whose genius and virtues we had once contemplated together, with mutual veneration and delight; whose approaching dissolution we felt, not only as an irreparable loss to ourselves, but as a national misfortune. On the nineteenth of April, the close of a life so wonderfully chequered, and so universally interesting, appeared to be very near.

On Sunday, the twentieth, he seemed a little revived.

On Monday he appeared dying, but recovered so much as to eat a slight dinner.

Tuesday and Wednesday he grew apparently weaker every hour.

On Thursday he sat up, as usual, in the evening.

Friday, the twenty-fifth, at five in the morning, a deadly change appeared in his features.

He spoke no more.

His last words were uttered in the night:—In rejecting a cordial, he said to Miss Perowne, who had presented it to him, "What can it signify?" Yet, even at this time, he did not seem impressed with any idea of dying, although he conceived that nothing would contribute to his health.

The deplorable inquietude and darkness of his latter years were mercifully terminated by a most gentle and tranquil dissolution. He passed through the awful moments of death so mildly, that although five persons were present, and observing him, in his chamber, not one of them perceived him to expire: but he had ceased to breathe about five minutes before five in the afternoon.

On Saturday, the third of May, he was buried in a part of Dereham church, called St. Edmund's Chapel, and the funeral was attended by several of his relations.

He died intestate: his affectionate relation, Lady Hesketh, has fulfilled the office of his administratrix, and given orders for a monument to his memory where his ashes repose. In the metropolis, I trust, the public affection for an author so eminently deserving, will enable me to make his manuscripts relating to Milton, which are now before me, the means of erecting a cenotaph in his honour, suitable to the dignity of his poetical character, and to the liberality of the nation, that may be justly proud of expressing a parental sense of his merit.

I have regarded my own intimacy with him as a blessing to myself, and the remembrance of it is now endeared to me by the hope that it may enable me to delineate the man and the poet with such fidelity and truth, as may render his remote, and even his future admirers, minutely acquainted with an exemplary being, most worthy to be intimately known and universally beloved.



The person and mind of Cowper seem to have been formed with equal kindness by nature; and it may be questioned if she ever bestowed on any man, with a fonder prodigality, all the requisites to conciliate affection and to inspire respect.

From his figure, as it first appeared to me, in his sixty-second year, I should imagine that he must have been very comely in his youth; and little had time injured his countenance, since his features expressed, at that period of life, all the powers of his mind and all the sensibility of his heart.

He was of a middle stature, rather strong than delicate in the form of his limbs; the colour of his hair was a light brown, that of his eyes a bluish grey, and his complexion ruddy. In his dress he was neat, but not finical; in his diet temperate, and not dainty.

He had an air of pensive reserve in his deportment, and his extreme shyness sometimes produced in his manners an indescribable mixture of awkwardness and dignity: but no being could be more truly graceful, when he was in perfect health, and perfectly pleased



with his society. Towards women, in particular, his behaviour and conversation were delicate and fascinating in the highest degree.

Nature had given him a warm constitution; and had he been prosperous in early love, it is probable that he might have enjoyed a more uniform and happy tenor of health. But a disappointment of the heart, arising from the cruelty of fortune, threw a cloud on his juvenile spirit. Thwarted in love, the native fire of his temperament turned impetuously into the kindred channel of devotion. The smothered flames of desire uniting with the vapours of constitutional melancholy and the fervency of religious zeal, produced altogether that irregularity of corporeal sensation, and of mental health, which gave such extraordinary vicissitudes of splendour and of darkness to his mortal career, and made Cowper, at times, an idol of the purest admiration, and, at times, an object of the sincerest pity.

As a sufferer, indeed, no man could be more entitled to compassion, for no man was ever more truly compassionate to the sufferings of others. It was that rare portion of benevolent sensibility in his nature, which endeared him to persons of all ranks, who had opportunities of observing him in private life. The great prince of Conde used to say, "No man is a hero to his familiar domestic:" but Cowper was really more. He was beloved and revered with a sort of idolatry in his family; not from any romantic ideas of his magical powers as a poet, but from that evangelical gentleness of manners and purity of conduct which illumined the shade of his sequestered life.

I may be suspected of speaking with the fond partiality, the unperceived exaggerations of friendship; but the fear of such censure shall not deter me from bearing my most deliberate testimony to the excellence of him whose memory I revere, and saying, that, as a man, he made, of all men whom I have ever had opportunities to observe so minutely, the nearest approaches to moral perfection. Indeed, a much more experienced judge of mankind, and Cowper's associate in early life, Lord Thurlow, has expressed the same idea of his character; for being once requested to describe him, he replied with that solemn energy of dignified elocution, by which he is accustomed to give a very forcible effect to a few simple words—"Cowper is truly a good man."

His daily habits of study and exercise, his whole domestic life, is so minutely and agreeably delineated in the series of his letters, that it is unnecessary for his biographer to expatiate upon them. I have little occasion, indeed, to dwell on this topic; but let me apply to my young readers a few expressive words of Louis Racine, in

addressing to his own son the Life and Letters of his illustrious father.—“ *Quand vous l' aurez connu dans sa famille, vous le gouteriez mieux, lorsque vous viendrez a le connoitre sur le Parnasse: vous scaurez, pourquoi ses vers sont toujours pleins de Sentimens.*”——I might add, in alluding to a few of his most tender and pathetic letters: “ *C'est une simplicité de moeurs si admirable dans un homme tout sentiment, et tout coeur, qui est cause, qu'en copiant pour vous ses lettres, je verse a tous momens des larmes, parcequ'il me communique la tendresse, dont il etoit rempli.*”——Cowper greatly resembled his eminent and exemplary brothers of Parnassus, Racine and Metastasio, in the simplicity and tenderness of his domestic character.

His voice conspired with his features to announce to all who saw and heard him, the extreme sensibility of his heart: and in reading aloud he furnished the chief delight of those social, enchanting winter evenings, which he has described so happily in the fourth book of the Task. He had been taught, by his parents, at home, to recite English verse, in the early years of his childhood; and acquired considerable applause, as a child, in the recital of Gay's popular fable, “The hare and many friends:” a circumstance that, probably, had great influence in raising his passion for poetry, and in giving him a peculiar fondness for the wild persecuted animal that he converted into a very grateful domestic companion.

Secluded from the world, as Cowper had long been, he yet retained, in advanced life, uncommon talents for conversation; and his conversation was distinguished by mild and benevolent pleasantry, by delicate humour peculiar to himself, or by a higher tone of serious good sense, and those united charms of a cultivated mind, which he has himself very happily described, in drawing the colloquial character of a venerable divine.

Grave, without dullness; learned, without pride;  
 Exact, yet not precise; though meek, keen-eyed;  
 Who, when occasion justified its use,  
 Had wit, as bright as ready, to produce;  
 Could fetch from records of an earlier age,  
 Or from philosophy's enlightened page,  
 His rich materials, and regale your ear  
 With strains it was a privilege to hear:  
 Yet, above all, his luxury supreme,  
 And his chief glory, was the gospel theme:  
 Ambitious not to shine, or to excel,  
 But to treat justly what he lov'd so well,

Men who withdraw themselves from the ordinary forms of society, whether delicacy of health, or a passion for study, or both united, occasion their retirement from the world, are generally obliged to pay a heavy tax for the privacy they enjoy, in having their habits of life and their temper very darkly misrepresented by the ignorant malice of offended pride. The sweetness and purity of Cowper's real character did not perfectly preserve him from such misrepresentation. Many persons have been misled so far as to suppose him a severe and sour sectary, though gentleness and good nature were among his pre-eminent qualities, and though he was deliberately attached to the established religion of his country. The reader may recollect a letter to his young kinsman, who was then on the point of taking orders, in which Cowper sufficiently proves his attachment to the church of England; and he speaks so decidedly on the subject, that certainly none of the sectaries have a right to reckon him in their number. He was, however, as his poetry has most elegantly testified, a most ardent friend to liberty, both civil and religious; and his love of freedom induced him to animadvert, with lively indignation, on every officious and oppressive exercise of episcopal authority. Few ministers of the gospel have searched the scripture more diligently than Cowper, and, in his days of health, with a happier effect; for a spirit of evangelical kindness and purity pervaded the whole tenor of his language, and all the conduct of his life.

His infinite good nature, as a literary man, is strikingly displayed in the indulgent condescension with which he gratified two successive clerks of Northampton, in writing for them their annual copies of mortuary verses. He thought, like the amiable Plutarch, that the most ordinary office may be dignified by a benevolent spirit.

In describing himself to his amiable friend, Mr. Park, the engraver, he spoke too slightly of his own learning; for he was, in truth, a scholar, as any man may fairly be called who is master of four languages besides his own. Cowper read Greek and Latin, French and Italian; but the extraordinary incidents of his life precluded him from indulging himself in a multiplicity of books, and his reading was conformable to the rule of Pliny, "*Non multa, sed multum.*"

He had devoted some time to the pencil, and he mentions his reason for quitting it in the following passage of a letter to the same correspondent.

*Weston, 1792.*

It was only one year that I gave to drawing, for I found it an employment hurtful to my eyes, which have

always been weak and subject to inflammation. I finished my attempts in this way with three small landscapes, which I presented to a lady. These may, perhaps, exist, but I have now no correspondence with the fair proprietor. Except these, there is nothing remaining to show that I ever aspired to such an accomplishment.

The native warmth of Cowper's affections led him to take a particular pleasure in recording the merit with which he was personally acquainted: a remarkable instance of this amiable disposition appears in his condescending to translate the Latin epitaph on his school-master, Dr. Lloyd. This epitaph, with Cowper's version, and his remark upon it, my reader may find in the Appendix: another epitaph on his uncle, Mr. Ashley Cowper, I shall insert here, as it displays, in a most pleasing point of view, both the affectionate ardour and the modesty of its author.

#### LINES

*Composed for a Memorial of ASHLEY COWPER, Esq. immediately after his death, by his Nephew WILLIAM, of Weston.*

Farewell! endued with all that could engage  
 All hearts to love thee, both in youth and age!  
 In prime of life, for sprightliness enroll'd  
 Among the gay, yet virtuous as the old;  
 In life's last stage (Oh blessing rarely found!)  
 Pleasant as youth, with all its blossoms crown'd;  
 Through every period of this changeful state  
 Unchang'd thyself—wise, good, affectionate!

Marble may flatter, and lest this should seem  
 O'ercharg'd with praises on so dear a theme,  
 Although thy worth be more than half suppress'd,  
 Love shall be satisfied, and veil the rest.

The person whom these verses commemorate was himself an elegant poet, and father of the lady to whom so many of Cowper's letters are addressed in the preceding collection. The reader can hardly fail to recollect the very pathetic manner in which the poet spoke to the daughter of this gentleman on the death of a parent so justly beloved.

In describing the social and friendly faculties of Cowper, it



would be unjust not to bestow particular notice on a talent that he possessed in perfection, and one that friendship ought especially to honour, as she is indebted to it for a considerable portion of her most valuable delights: I mean the talent of writing letters.

McImoth, the elegant translator of Pliny's letters, has observed, in an interesting note to the thirteenth letter of the second book, how highly the art of epistolary writing was esteemed by the Romans, lamenting, at the same time, that our country has not distinguished itself in this branch of literature.

My late accomplished friend, Dr. Warton, has also remarked, in his life of Pope, that "in the various sorts of composition in which the English have excelled, we have, perhaps, the least claim to excellence in the article of letters of our celebrated countrymen."

Those of Pope are generally thought deficient in that air of perfect ease, that unstudied flow of affection, which gives the highest charm to epistolary writing: but those unaffected graces which the delicate critic wished in vain to find in the letters of Pope, may be found, abundant and complete, in the various correspondence of Cowper. He was, indeed, a being of such genuine simplicity and tenderness, so absolute a stranger to artifice and disguise; his affections were so ardent and so pure, that in writing to those he loved he could not fail to show what really passed in his own bosom, and his letters are most faithful representatives of his heart. He could never subscribe to that dangerous and sophistical dogma of Dr. Johnson, in his splenetic disquisition on the letters of Pope, that "friendship has no tendency to secure veracity."

It certainly has such a tendency, and in proportion to the sense and the goodness of the writer; for a sensible, and a good man must rather wish to afford his bosom friend the most accurate knowledge of his real character, than to obtain a precarious increase of regard by any sort of illusion. The great charm of confidential epistolary intercourse to such a man arises from the persuasion, that veracity is not dangerous in speaking of his own defects, when he is speaking to a true and a considerate friend.

The letters not intended for the eye of the public have generally obtained the greatest share of popular applause; and for this reason, because such letters display no profusion of studied ornaments, but abound in the simple and powerful attractions of nature and truth.

Letters, indeed, will ever please, when they are frank, confidential conversations on paper between persons of well-principled and highly cultivated minds, of graceful manners, and of tender affections.

The language of such letters must, of course, have that mixture



of ease and elegance peculiarly suited to such composition, and most happily exemplified in the letters of Cicero and of Cowper.— These two great masters of a perfect epistolary style have both mentioned their own excellent and simple rule for attaining it—to use only the language of familiar conversation.

Cowper's opinion of two English writers, much admired for the style of their letters, is expressed in the following extract from one of his own to Mr. Hill.

“ I have been reading Gray's Works, and think him sublime. \* \* \* \* I once thought Swift's letters the best that could be written, but I like Gray's better. His humour, or his wit, or whatever it is to be called, is never ill-natured or offensive, and yet, I think, equally poignant with the Dean's.”

The letters of Gray are admirable, but they appear to me not equal to those of Cowper, either in the graces of simplicity, or in warmth of affection.

The very sweet stanzas that Cowper has written on friendship, would be alone sufficient to prove that his heart and spirit were most tenderly alive to all the delicacy and delight of that inestimable connection. He was indeed such a friend himself, as the voice of wisdom describes, in calling a true friend “ the medicine of life :” and though misfortune precluded him, in his early days, from the enjoyment of connubial love, and of professional prosperity, he may be esteemed as singularly happy in this very important consolatory privilege of human existence; particularly in his friendships with that finer part of the creation, whose sensibility makes them most able to relish, or to call forth the powers of diffident genius, and to alleviate the pressure of mental affliction. It may be questioned if any poet on the records of Parnassus ever enjoyed a confidential intimacy, as Cowper did, with a variety of accomplished women, maintaining, at the same time, consummate innocence of conduct.

Pre-eminent as he was, in warmth and vigour of fancy and affection, the quickness and strength of his understanding were proportioned to the more perilous endowments of his mind. Though he had received from nature lively appetites and passions, his reason held them in the most steady and laudable subjection.

The only internal enemy of his peace and happiness, that his intellect could not subdue, was one tremendous idea, mysteriously impressed on his fervent imagination, in a scene of bodily disorder, and at such periods recurring upon his mind with an overwhelming influence, which not all the admirable powers of his own innocent upright spirit, nor all the united aids of art and nature, were able to counteract.

Though he was sometimes subject to imaginary fears, he maintained, in his season of health, a most magnanimous reliance on the kindness of heaven. This sublime sentiment is forcibly and beautifully expressed in the following passage, extracted from his correspondence with Mr. Hill.

“ I suppose you are sometimes troubled on my account, but you need not. I have no doubt it will be seen, when my days are closed, that I served a master who would not suffer me to want any thing that was good for me. He said to Jacob, ‘ I will surely do thee good ;’ and this he said not for his sake only, but for ours also, if we trust in him. This thought relieves me from the greatest part of the distress I should else suffer in my present circumstances, and enables me to sit down peacefully upon the wreck of my fortune.”

He also possessed and exerted that becoming fortitude which teaches a man to support, under various trials, the sober respect that he owes to himself. Praise, however exalted, did not intoxicate him, and detraction was unable to poison his pure sense of his own merit: so that he thus escaped an infirmity into which some great and good poets have fallen, an infirmity that was remarkable in Racine, and which I had once occasion to observe and lament in a very eminent departed author of our own country, who complained to me that time had so far depressed his spirits as to take from him all sense of pleasure in public praise, and yet left him acute feelings of pain from public detraction.

Cowper possessed, in his original motives for appearing in the character of a poet, the best possible preservative against this double infelicity of mind.

His predominant desire was to render his poetry an instrument of good to mankind: his love of fame was a secondary passion, and, like all his passions, in perfect subjection to the great principles of religious duty which he made the rule of his life.

It is evident, from the tenor of his correspondence, that he had a lively and a proper relish for praise, when justly and affectionately bestowed. The quickness and the nicety of his feelings, on this delicate point, he has displayed in the following letter to a lady, whose various talents he very highly esteemed, on receiving her poem, “ *The Emigrants*,” addressed to him in a dedication most worthy of such a patron.

To Mrs. CHARLOTTE SMITH.

*Weston, July 25, 1793.*

MY DEAR MADAM,

Many reasons concurred to make me impatient for the arrival of your most acceptable present, and among them was the fear lest you should, perhaps, suspect me of tardiness in acknowledging so great a favour; a fear that, as often as it prevailed, distressed me exceedingly. At length I have received it, and my little bookseller assures me that he sent it the very day he got it. By some mistake, however, the waggon brought it instead of the coach, which occasioned a delay that I could ill afford.

It came this morning, about an hour ago: consequently I have not had time to peruse the poem, though, you may be sure, I have found enough for the perusal of the dedication. I have, in fact, given it three readings, and in each have found increasing pleasure.

I am a whimsical creature. When I write for the public, I write, of course, with a desire to please, in other words, to acquire fame, and I labour accordingly; but when I find that I have succeeded, feel myself alarmed, and ready to shrink from the acquisition.

This I have felt more than once; and when I saw my name at the head of your dedication, I felt it again: but the consummate delicacy of your praise soon convinced me that I might spare my blushes, and that the demand was less upon my modesty than my gratitude. Of that be assured, dear Madam, and of the truest esteem and respect of your most obliged and affectionate humble servant,

WM. COWPER.

*P. S.* I should have been much grieved to have let slip this opportunity of thanking you for your charming sonnets, and my two most agreeable old friends, Monimia and Orlando.

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Cowper felt the full value of applause when conferred by a liberal and a powerful mind; and I had a singularly pleasing opportunity of observing the just sensibility of his nature on this point, by carrying to him, in one of my visits to Weston, a recent newspaper, including the speech of Mr. Fox, in which that accomplished orator had given new lustre to a splendid passage in the *Task*, by reciting it in parliament. The passage alluded to contains the

sublime verses on the destruction of the bastille ; verses that were originally composed in the form of a prophecy. The eloquence of the poet and orator united could hardly furnish a perfect description of the double delight which this unexpected honour afforded to the author, and to the good old enthusiastic admirer and cherisher of his talents, Mrs. Unwin. Her feelings were infinitely the most vivid on this agreeable occasion ; for the poet, though he truly enjoyed such honourable applause, was ever on his guard against the perils of praise, and had continually impressed on his own devout spirit, his primary motives of poetical ambition. The mention of these motives, which conduce, as well as his extraordinary powers, to distinguish Cowper in the highest rank of illustrious poets, will naturally lead me to consider him in that point of view, and to examine the difficulties he has surmounted, and the great aims he has accomplished, in his poetical capacity.

Accident, idleness, want, spleen, love, and the passion for fame, have all, in their turns, had such occasional influence over the human faculties, as to induce men of considerable mental powers to devote themselves to the composition of verse : but the poetical character of Cowper appears to have had a much nobler origin. To estimate that character according to its real dignity, we should consider him as a poet formed by the munificence of nature and the decrees of heaven. He seems to have received his rare poetical powers as a gift from providence, to compensate the pressure of much personal calamity, and to enable him to become, though secluded by irregular health from the worldly business, and from the ordinary pastimes of men, a singular benefactor to mankind.

If we attend to the rise and progress of his works, we shall perceive that such was the predominant aim of this truly philanthropic poet, and that, in despite of his manifold impediments and troubles, heaven graciously enabled him to accomplish the noblest purpose that the sublimest faculties can devise for their own most arduous exercise, and most delightful reward. He had cultivated his native talent for poetry in early life, although the extreme modesty of his nature had restrained him from a public display of his poetical powers. Through many years of mental disquietude and affliction, that powerful talent, which was destined to burst forth with such unrivalled lustre, seems to have remained in absolute inactivity ; but in different seasons of a very long abstinence from poetical exertion, his mind had been engaged in such studies (when health allowed him to study) as form, perhaps, the best possible preparation for great poetical achievements : I mean a fervent application to that book which furnishes the most ample and beneficial aliment to the heart and to the fancy, the book to which



Milton and Young were indebted for their poetical sublimity. Cowper, in reading the Bible, admired and studied the eloquence of the prophets. He was particularly charmed with the energy of their language in describing the wrath of the Almighty.

By his zealous attention to the scripture, he incessantly treasured in his own capacious mind those inexhaustible stores of sentiment and expression which enabled him gradually to ascend the purest heights of poetical renown, which rendered him, at last, what he ardently wished to prove—the poet of christianity—the monitor of the world.

It was after a very long and severe fit of mental depression, that, by the friendly request of his faithful associate in affliction, he sought, in poetical composition of considerable extent, a salutary exercise for a mind formed for the most active and beneficent exertion, though occasionally subject to an utter suspension of its admirable powers. I have already mentioned the circumstance, communicated to me by Mrs. Unwin, concerning the first extensive poem, in point of time, that appears in the first volume of Cowper.

“The Progress of Error” seems the least attractive among the several admonitory poems of the collection, and we judge from it, that even the genius of Cowper required the frequent habit of writing verse to display itself to advantage. Yet even this poem, in which he is said to have made the first serious trial of his long suspended talent, has passages of exquisite beauty. Take, for example, his portrait of Innocence and Folly, painted with the delicate simplicity and tenderness of Corregio.

Both baby-featur'd, and of infant size,  
View'd from a distance, and with heedless eyes,  
Folly and Innocence are so alike,  
The diff'rence, though essential, fails to strike :  
Yet Folly ever has a vacant stare,  
A simp'ring countenance, a trifling air :  
But Innocence, sedate, serene, erect,  
Delights us by engaging our respect.

This poem also discovers, in some degree, that wonderful combination of very different powers, which the subsequent works of Cowper display in delightful profusion.

The affectionate and accomplished biographer of Burns has fallen (only, I apprehend, from a casual slip of memory) into a sort of silent injustice towards Cowper, when in speaking of the few poets “who have at once excelled in humour, in tenderness, and in sub-



limity," he affirms that "this praise, in modern times, is only due to Ariosto, to Shakspeare, and perhaps to Voltaire."

Recollection, I am confident, will rapidly convince such a consummate judge of poetical merit, that the works of Cowper contain many examples of that triple excellence, which is assuredly most rare, and which the masterly biographer very justly attributes to the marvellous peasant whose life and genius he has so feelingly and so honourably described. But to return to the poem of which I was speaking: it proves that Cowper could occasionally blend the moral humour of Hogarth, with the tenderness and sublimity that belong to artists of a superior rank. The portraits of the English travellers and the foreign Abbe, that are sketched in this poem, are all touched with the spirit of Hogarth.

The Progress of Error contains also some of those happy verses of serious morality, in which Cowper excelled; verses that, expressing a simple truth with perfect grace and precision, rapidly fix themselves, and with a lasting proverbial influence, on the memory. I will cite only two detached couplets in proof of my assertion.

None sends his arrow to the mark in view,  
Whose hand is feeble, or his aim untrue.  
Call'd to the temple of impure delight;  
He that abstains, and he alone does right.

As soon as Cowper found that the composition of moral verse was medicinal to his own mind, he seems to have formed the noble resolution of making his works an universal medicine for the various mental infirmities of the world. His own ideas on this subject are perfectly expressed in the following passage from his first letter to his friend Mr. Bull, who began his correspondence with the poet by a letter of praise, on the publication of his first volume.

"March 24, 1782.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Your letter gave me great pleasure, both as a testimony of your approbation and of your regard. I wrote in hopes of pleasing you, and such as you, and though I must confess that, at the same time, I cast a side-long glance at the good-liking of the world at large, I believe I can say it was more for the sake of their advantage and instruction than their praise. They are children; if we give them physic, we must sweeten the rim of the cup with honey. If my book is so far honoured as to be made the vehicle of true knowledge to any that are ignorant, I shall rejoice, and do already rejoice, that it has procured me a proof of your esteem."

It was probably this idea of tinging the rim of the cup with honey (an expression used by Lucretius and by Tasso) which induced Cowper to place in the front of his volume the poem entitled *Table Talk*. The title has in itself an inviting appearance, and the lively desultory spirit of the composition sufficiently vindicates the propriety of the title. It is a rapid and animated descant on a variety of interesting topics. The brief tale from that humorous and high-spirited Spaniard, Quevedo, is admirably told, and I have frequently heard it recited as a most striking example of Cowper's talent for such narration, by a very dear departed friend of the most delicate discernment.

The poet, in this outset of his moral enterprise, bestows a graceful compliment on his sovereign—

“ His life a lesson to the land he sways.”

And he judged it right to annex to this high compliment such a profession of his own independent spirit as every ingenuous mind must delight to observe from the pen of a poet, when his life and his writings reflect a reciprocal lustre on each other.

A bribe !

The worth of his three kingdoms I defy  
 To lure me to the baseness of a lie ;  
 And of all lies (be that one poet's boast !)  
 The lie that flatters I abhor the most.

This professed abhorrence of adulation was uttered in the real spirit of simplicity and truth. No poet was ever more perfectly free from that base propensity, which is sometimes erroneously imputed to the poetical tribe, who, from their peculiar warmth of sensation, are often thought to flatter, when they speak only their genuine feelings.

Perhaps Cowper sometimes indulged himself in a very different weakness, if I may call the little excesses of a generous independent pride by so harsh an appellation.

It is incumbent on me to explain the petty foible of my friend to which I allude. Having composed, from the impulse of his heart, his little poem on the elevation of his intimate companion in former days, Lord Thurlow, to the dignity of Chancellor, he condemned it to lie in long concealment, from an apprehension that, although he knew the praise to be just, it might be supposed to flow from a sordid and selfish solicitude to derive some advantage from the recent grandeur of a man whom he had once cordially loved, but whom

their different destinies had made for many years almost a personal stranger to the poet, though never an alien to his heart.

But to resume the few remarks I wish to make on the Poem of Table Talk. It contains what Cowper could readily command, a great variety of style. Much of the poem has the manner of Churchill, and particularly the lines that exhibit a strong character of that popular and powerful satirist; a poet whose highest excellence Cowper possessed, with many more refined attractions, which the energetic, but coarse spirit of that modern Juvenal could not attain. Towards the close of Table-Talk, the poet introduces, very happily, what he had proposed to himself as the main scope of his own poetical labours—the service that a poet may render to the great interest of religion. This he describes in a strain of sublimity, and contrasts it very ably with inferior objects of poetical ambition.

From this poem of infinite diversity it would be easy to select specimens of almost every excellence that can be found in a work of this nature. Truth, however, obliges me to observe, that this admirable prelude to the collected poetry of Cowper has a weak and ungraceful conclusion.

The four poems, entitled, Truth, Expostulation, Hope, and Charity, are four Christian exhortations to piety, which may be thought tedious and dull by readers who have no relish for devotional eloquence, or who, however blest with a serious sense of religion, have too hastily admitted the very strange and groundless dogma of Dr. Johnson, that “contemplative piety cannot be poetical;” a position resembling that of the ancient sophist, who denied the existence of motion, and whose indignant hearer answered him by walking immediately in his sight. With such simple and forcible refutation, the genius of Cowper replies to the paradoxical pedantry of a critic, whose high intellectual powers, when he exerts and exhausts them to command and illuminate the expansive sphere of poetry, delight and disgust his readers alternately, by a frequent mixture of gigantic force and dwarfish imbecility. His weak, though solemn sophistry on this subject is completely refuted by the poems of Cowper, because contemplative piety, which, according to the critic’s assertion, cannot be poetical, is, in truth, one of the most powerful charms by which this devout poet accomplishes his poetical enchantment.

But to return to the four sacred poems that lead me to this remark. That on Truth exhibits the author’s singular talent of blending the humorous and the sublime. In his portrait of the sanctified pride, he is at once the copyist and the compeer of Hogarth: in his picture of cheerful piety, and true Christian free-

dom, he soars to a species of excellence that the pencil of Hogarth could not command.

Expostulation flows in a more even tenor of sublime admonition: it was founded on a sermon preached by the author's zealous and eloquent friend, Mr. Newton, and contains the following admirable description of what the clergy ought to be.

The priestly brotherhood, devout, sincere,  
 From mean self-interest and ambition clear,  
 Their hope in heaven, servility their scorn,  
 Prompt to persuade, expostulate, and warn;  
 Their wisdom pure, and given them from above;  
 Their usefulness insur'd by zeal and love;  
 As meek as the man Moses, and withal  
 As bold as, in Agrippa's presence, Paul;  
 Should fly the world's contaminating touch,  
 Holy and unpolluted; are thine such?

I will not transcribe the closing couplet, because it appears to me one of the few passages in the poet where the warm current of his zeal hurried him into a hasty expression of asperity, not in unison with the native and habitual candour of his contemplative mind.

The Poem on Hope, although the poet means only to describe

“That hope which can alone exclude despair,”

has a gay diversity of colouring, and the dialogue introduced is written with exquisite pleasantry. The great and constant aim of the author is expressed in his motto,

“Doceas iter, et sacra ostia pandas.”

In the commencement of his Poem on Charity, the author renders a just and eloquent tribute to the humanity of Captain Cook; and in the progress of it bursts into an animated and graceful eulogy on Howard, the visitor of prisons. The sentiments that Cowper endeavours to impress on the heart of his reader, in this series of devotional poems, are drawn from the great fountain of intellectual purity, the gospel; and to the poet, in his character of a Christian Monitor, we may justly and gratefully apply the following verses from this poem on Charity.

When one that holds communion with the skies  
 Has fill'd his urn where these pure waters rise,



And once more mingles with us meaner things,  
 'Tis e'en as if an angel shook his wings;  
 Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide  
 That tells us whence his treasures are supplied.

In the extensive and admirably varied Poem on Conversation, the poet shines as a teacher of manners as well as of morality and religion.

It is remarkable that, in this work, he is particularly severe on what he considered as his own peculiar defect, that excess of diffidence, that insurmountable shyness, which is so apt to freeze the current of English conversation.

Our sensibilities are so acute,  
 The fear of being silent makes us mute.

— — —  
 True modesty is a discerning grace,  
 And only blushes in the proper place;  
 But counterfeit is blind, and skulks through fear,  
 Where 'tis a shame to be asham'd t' appear;  
 Humility the parent of the first,  
 The last by vanity produced, and nurs'd.  
 The circle form'd, we sit, in silent state,  
 Like figures drawn upon a dial-plate.  
 Yes Ma'am, and no Ma'am, utter'd softly, show,  
 Every five minutes, how the minutes go.

This poem abounds with much admirable description, both serious and comic. The portrait of the splenetic man is, perhaps, the most highly finished example of comic power; and the scene of the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, is a perfect model of solemn and graceful simplicity. I cannot cease to speak of this very attractive poem without observing, that the author has inserted in it two passages intended to obviate such objections as he conceived most likely to be urged against the tendency of his writings. He was aware that the light and vain might suppose him a gloomy fanatic, and as a preservative against such injurious misconception, he composed the following just and animated lines.

What is fanatic frenzy? scorn'd so much!  
 And dreaded more than a contagious touch.  
 I grant it dangerous, and approve your fear;  
 That fire is catching if you draw too near;  
 But sage observers oft mistake the flame,  
 And give true piety that odious name.



He then draws an excellent picture of real fanaticism, and such a picture as could not have been painted by one of her votaries.

Again, to vindicate the cheerful tendency of the lessons he wished to inculcate, he exclaims,

— Let no man charge me, that I mean  
To clothe in sables every social scene,  
And give good company a face severe,  
As if they met around a father's bier!

I will add a few verses from the close of the poem, because they appear a just description of his own eloquence, both in poetry and conversation, when he conversed with those he loved—He is speaking of a character improved by a proper sense of religion.

Thus touch'd, the tongue receives a sacred cure  
For all that was absurd, prophane, impure :  
Held within modest bounds, the tide of speech  
Pursues the course that truth and nature teach ;  
Where'er it winds, the salutary stream,  
Sprightly and fresh, enriches every theme ;  
While all the happy man possess'd before,  
The gift of nature, or the classic store,  
Is made subservient to the grand design  
For which Heaven form'd the faculty divine.

The Poem on Retirement may be a delightful and useful lesson to those who wish to enjoy and improve a condition of life which is generally coveted by all in some period of their existence. The different votaries of retirement are very happily described; and the portrait of Melancholy, in particular, has all that minute and forcible excellence, derived from the faithful delineation of nature; for the poet described himself when under the overwhelming pressure of that grievous malady. The caution to the lover is expressed with all the delicacy and force of the most friendly admonition; and the fair sex are too much obliged to the tenderness of the poet to resent his bold assertion, that they are not entitled to absolute adoration.

This poem contains several of those exquisite proverbial couplets that I have noticed on a former occasion. Verses like the following are fit to be treasured in the heart of every man.

An idler is a watch that wants both hands ;  
As useless if it goes, as when it stands.

Absence of occupation is not rest ;  
 A mind quite vacant is a mind distrest.

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Religion does not censure, or exclude  
 Unnumber'd pleasures, harmlessly pursued.

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The very sweet close of this poem I will not dwell upon at present, because I mean to notice it in collecting, as I advance, the most remarkable passages of the poet, in which he has spoken of himself. I must not, however, bid adieu to his first volume for the present, without observing that, of the smaller poems at the end of it, three are eminently happy, both in sentiment and expression; the verses assigned to Alexander Selkirk, the Winter Nosegay, and Mutual Forbearance.

It may, perhaps, console some future diffident poet, on his first appearance in public, if his merits happen to be depreciated by the presumptuous sentence of periodical criticism; it may console him to be informed, that when the first volume of Cowper was originally published, one of the critical journals of his day represented him as a good devout gentleman, without a particle of true poetical genius. To this very curious decision we may apply with a pleasant stroke of poetical justice, the following couplet from the Book so sagaciously described.

The moles and bats, in full assembly, find,  
 On special search, the keen-eyed eagle blind.

But to those who were inclined to deny his title to the rank and dignity of a poet, Cowper made the best of all possible replies, by publishing a poem which rapidly and justly became a prime favourite with every poetical reader.

In his *Task*, he not only surpassed all his former compositions, but executed an extensive work, of such original and diversified excellence, that, as it arose without the aid of any model, so it will probably remain for ever unequalled by a succession of imitators.

Unde nil majus generatur ipso,  
 Nec viget quicquam simile aut secundum.

The *Task* may be called a bird's-eye view of human life. It is a minute and extensive survey of every thing most interesting to the reason, to the fancy, and to the affections of man. It exhibits his pleasures and his pains, his pastimes and his business, his folly

and his wisdom, his dangers and his duties, all with such exquisite facility and force of expression, with such grace and dignity of sentiment, that rational beings, who wish to render themselves more amiable and more happy, can hardly be more advantageously employed than in frequent perusal of the Task.

“ O how fayre fruits may you to mortal men  
 “ From Wisdom’s garden give! How many may  
 “ By you the wiser and the better prove!”

To apply three verses, of singular simplicity, from Nicholas Grimoald, (one of the earliest writers of English blank verse) to the poet who has added such a large increase of variegated lustre to that species of composition.

The Task, beginning with all the peaceful attractions of sportive gaiety, rises to the most solemn and awful grandeur, to the highest strain of religious solemnity. Its frequent variation of tone is masterly in the greatest degree, and the main spell of that inexhaustible enchantment which hurries the reader through a flowery maze of many thousand verses, without allowing him to feel a moment of languor or fatigue. Perhaps no author, ancient or modern, ever possessed, so completely as Cowper, the nice art of passing, by the most delicate transition, from subjects to subjects that might otherwise seem but little or not at all allied to each other, the rare talent

“ Happily to steer  
 “ From grave to gay, from lively to severe.”

The Task may be compared to one of the grand fabrics of musical contrivance, where a single work contains a vast variety of power for producing such harmony and delight as might be expected to arise only from a large collection of instruments. The auditor is charmed by the vicissitudes of partial excellence, and astonished by the magnificent compass of a single production. But the supreme attraction of the Task arises from that conviction, which all who delight in it cannot fail to feel, that the poet, however pre-eminent in intellectual powers, must have been equally pre-eminent in tender benevolence of heart. His reader loves him as a sympathetic friend, and blesses him as an invaluable instructor.

The truth of this remark may be illustrated by the following verses, which I insert with pleasure, although I know not their author, as an elegant proof of that affection in a stranger, which the poetry of Cowper has such a peculiar tendency to inspire,

*On seeing a Sketch of COWPER by LAWRENCE.*

Sweet bard, whose mind, thus pictur'd in thy face,  
 O'er every feature spreads a nobler grace;  
 Whose keen, but soften'd eye appears to dart  
 A look of pity through the human heart;  
 To search the secrets of man's inward frame;  
 To weep with sorrow o'er his guilt and shame.  
 Sweet bard, with whom, in sympathy of choice,  
 I've oftimes left the world, at nature's voice,  
 To join the song that all her creatures raise,  
 To carol forth their great Creator's praise:  
 Or, wrapt in visions of immortal day,  
 Have gaz'd on Truth in Zion's heavenly way.  
 Sweet bard, may this thine image, all I know,  
 Or ever may, of Cowper's form below,  
 Teach one who views it, with a Christian's love,  
 To seek, and find thee in the realms above.

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Persons who estimate poetical talents more from the arbitrary dictates of established criticism than from their own feelings, may be disposed to exclude Cowper from the highest rank of poets, because he has written no original work of the epic form:—He has constructed no fable; he has described no great action, accomplished by a variety of characters, derived either from history or invention. But if the great epic poets of all nations were assembled to give their suffrages concerning the rank to be assigned to Cowper as a poet, I am persuaded they would address him to this effect: “We are proud to receive you as a brother, because, if the form of your composition is different from ours, you are certainly equal to the noblest of our fraternity in the scope and effect of your verse. You are so truly a poet by the munificence of nature, that she seems to have given you an exclusive faculty, (resembling the fabulous faculty of Midas relating to gold, though given to you for beneficial purposes alone) the faculty of turning whatever you touch to a fit subject for poetry: you are the poet of familiar life: but you paint it with such felicity of design and execution, that, as long as verse is valued upon earth as a vehicle of instruction and delight, you must and ought to be revered and beloved as pre-eminently instructive and delightful: by having accomplished, with equal felicity, the two great and arduous objects of your art, you have deserved to be the most popular of poets.”

Such, I apprehend, would be the praise which all the perfect judges of his poetry, could they be selected from every age, past, present, and future, would unanimously bestow on the genius of Cowper. Yet the Task, though, taken altogether, it is, perhaps, the most attractive poem that was ever produced, and such as required the rarest assemblage of truly poetical powers for its production, bears, like every work from a human hand, that certain mark of a mortal agent—defect. Even the partiality of friendship must allow that the Task has its blemishes, and the greatest of them is that tone of asperity in reproof, which I am persuaded its gentle and benevolent author caught unconsciously from his frequent perusal of the prophets. The severe invective against the commemoration of Handel is the most striking instance of the asperity to which I allude, and it awakened the displeasure of a poetical lady, whose displeasure Cowper, of all men, would have been most truly sorry to have excited, had he been as well acquainted with the charms of her conversation as he was with her literary talents.

Cowper's eminent contemporary, the favourite poet of Scotland, seems to have felt, with fraternal sensibility, both the beauties and the blemishes of this most celebrated work.

“Is not the Task a glorious poem?” says Burns, in one of his letters to his accomplished and generous friend, Mrs. Dunlop: “the religion of the Task, bating a few scraps of Calvinistic divinity, is the religion of God and nature, the religion that exalts, that ennobles man.”

Though Cowper occasionally caught a certain air of Calvinistic austerity, he had not a particle of Calvin's intolerance in his heart. He could never have occasioned the cruel death of a Servetus. Indulgence and good nature were the poet's predominant qualities, and their influence was such, that, although his extraordinary talents for satire threw perpetual temptation in his way, he declined the temptation: he chose to be not a satirist, but a monitor. “*Vitæ sanctitas summa, comitas par; insectatur vitia non homines.*” He wisely observed that the most dignified satirists are little better than mere beadles of Parnassus. He considered satire rather as the bane than the glory both of Dryden and of Pope. In truth, though many an upright man has, in a fit of honest moral indignation, begun to write satire, in a persuasion that such works would benefit the world and do honour to himself, yet even satirists of this higher order have generally found that they did little more than gratify the common malignity of the world, and suffer angry and blind prejudice and passions to insinuate themselves imperceptibly into their nobler purposes, disfiguring their works and



disquieting their lives. Such, perhaps, was the natural train of reflection that suggested to Boileau the admirable verse in which he feelingly and candidly condemns the path that he had himself pursued—

“ C'est un mauvais metier que celui de medire.”

Cowper felt the truth of this maxim so forcibly, that in his Poem on Charity he has turned the sharpest weapons of satire against the satirists themselves.

Their acrid temper turns, as soon as stirr'd  
The milk of their good purpose all to curd ;  
Their zeal begotten, as their works rehearse,  
By lean despair upon an empty purse,  
The wild assassins start into the street,  
Prepar'd to poignard whomsoe'er they meet.

These lines are alone sufficient to prove that Cowper could occasionally assume the utmost severity of invective ; yet nature formed him to delight in exhortation more than in reproof ; and hence he justly describes himself, in his true monitory character, in the verses that very sweetly terminate his instructive Poem on Retirement.

Content, if, thus sequester'd, I may raise  
A monitor's, though not a poet's praise ;  
And while I teach an art too little known,  
To close life wisely, may not waste my own.

When a poet has so nobly entitled himself to the esteem and affection of his readers, the most fastidious of them can hardly be inclined to censure him as an egotist, if he takes more than one occasion to draw his own portrait. Few passages in Horace are read with more pleasure than the verses in which he gives a circumstantial account of himself. This reflection induces me to add a few lines from the Task, in which the poet has delineated his own situation exactly in that point of view which must be most pleasing to those who most feel an interest in his lot.

The more we have sympathised in his afflictions, the more we may rejoice in recollecting that he had seasons of felicity, which he, in some measure, makes our own by the delightful fidelity of his description.

" Had I the choice of sublunary good,  
 What could I wish that I possess not here?  
 Health, leisure, means t' improve it, friendship, peace,  
 No loose or wanton, though a wand'ring muse,  
 And constant occupation without care.  
 Thus bless'd, I draw a picture of that bliss;  
 Hopeless, indeed, that dissipated minds,  
 And profligate abusers of a world  
 Created fair so much in vain for them,  
 Should seek the guiltless joys that I describe,  
 Allur'd by my report,—but sure, no less,  
 That, self-condemn'd, they must neglect the prize,  
 And what they will not taste must yet approve.  
 What we admire we praise, and when we praise,  
 Advance it into notice, that its worth  
 Acknowledg'd, others may admire it too:  
 I therefore recommend, though at the risk  
 Of popular disgust, yet boldly still,  
 The cause of Piety, and sacred Truth,  
 And Virtue, and those scenes which God ordain'd  
 Should best secure them, and promote them most;  
 Scenes that I love, and with regret perceive  
 Forsaken, or through folly not enjoy'd."

Indeed, the great and rare art of enjoying life, in its purest and sublimest delights, is what this beneficent poet appears most anxious to communicate, and impress on the heart and soul of his reader. Witness that most exquisite passage of the *Task*, where he teaches the pensive student, who contemplates the face of earth, to survey the works of his Maker with a tender transport of filial exultation.

" He looks abroad into the varied field  
 Of Nature, and though poor, perhaps, compar'd  
 With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,  
 Calls the delightful scen'ry all his own.  
 His are the mountains, and the vallies his,  
 And the resplendent rivers: His to enjoy,  
 With a propriety that none can feel,  
 But who, with filial confidence inspir'd,  
 Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,  
 And smiling say—My Father made them all!  
 Are they not his by a peculiar right,  
 And by an emphasis of int'rest his,

Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,  
 Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind  
 With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love  
 That plann'd and built, and still upholds a world  
 So cloath'd with beauty for rebellious man?  
 Yes—ye may fill your garner, ye that reap  
 The loaded soil, and ye may waste much good  
 In senseless riot; but ye will not find  
 In feast, or in the chace, in song, or dance,  
 A liberty like his, who, unimpeach'd  
 Of usurpation, and to no man's wrong,  
 Appropriates nature as his Father's work,  
 And has a richer use of yours than you."

I believe the happiest hours of Cowper's life were those in which he was engaged on this noble poem; and as his happiness was, in a great measure, the fruit of his occupation, it is the more to be regretted that some incident, propitious to poetry, did not engage his active spirit a second time in the construction of a great original work.

There was a time, indeed, when his zealous and much regarded friend and neighbour, Mr. Greatheed, most kindly exhorted him to such an enterprise: an anecdote that I seize this opportunity of recording in the words of that gentleman.

"Homer being completely translated and committed to the press, I endeavoured to urge upon Mr. Cowper's attention the idea of a British epic, and would have recommended to him the reign of Alfred, the brightest ornament of the English throne, as one of the most eventful periods of our history. He discovered reluctance to the undertaking, and, to the best of my recollection, principally objected to the difficulties attending the introduction of a suitable machinery under the Christian dispensation. He pointed out the absurdities of Tasso, and the deficiency of Glover in this respect, and thought that Milton had occupied the only epic ground fit for a Christian poet."

Cowper would probably have thought otherwise on such a suggestion, had it been pressed upon his fancy in a more propitious season of his life, before his spirit was harassed by many troubles which attended him during the latter years that he bestowed upon Homer, and above all, by the enfeebled health of Mrs. Unwin, to which he gratefully devoted such incessant attention as must have inevitably impeded any great mental enterprise, even if his fervid imagination had been happily struck with any less obvious and more promising subject for epic song. Had he engaged in such an

enterprise at a favourable season of his life, I am persuaded he would have enriched the literature of his country with a composition more valuable than his version of Homer, allowing to that version as high a value as translation can boast.

He possessed all the requisites for the happiest accomplishment of the most arduous original work—fancy, judgment, and taste; all of the highest order, and in union so admirable that they heightened the powers of each other. He was singularly exempt from the two great sources of literary, and, indeed, of moral imperfections—negligence and affectation. From the first he was secured by a modest sense of his own abilities, united to a spirit of application, like the alacrity of Cæsar—

“ Nil actum reputans, si quid superesset agendum.”

From affectation of every kind he was perpetually preserved by a majestic simplicity of mind, never seduced by false splendour, and most feelingly alive to all the graces of truth. But with the rarest combination of different faculties for the successful execution of any great poetical work, his tender and modest genius, sublime as it was, wanted the animating voice of friendship to raise it into confident exertion. The Task would not have been written without the inspiring voice of Lady Austen. The solemn and sage spirit of Numa required the inspiration of his Egeria.

— Sic sacra Numæ ritusque colendos  
Mitis Aricino dictabat nympha sub antro.

The great pleasure that Cowper felt in the conversation of accomplished women, inspired him with that delicate vivacity with which he was accustomed to express his gratitude for a variety of little occasional presents that he received from his female friends.

Dr. Johnson has said surlily and unjustly of Milton, that “ he never learnt the art of doing little things with grace.” But in truth, poets who possess such exquisite feelings, and such powers of language, as belonged to Milton and to Cowper, can hardly fail to give elegance and grace to their poetical trifles, whenever affection leads them to trifle in verse. Cowper, whose sensations of gratitude were singularly strong, was remarkably happy in those sprightly poetical compliments which he often addressed to ladies, in return for some highly welcome, though trivial gift, endeared to his affectionate spirit by his regard for the giver. To illustrate this very amiable part of his character, I shall here insert a few of these animated and graceful trifles.

To my Cousin ANNE BODHAM,

*On receiving from her a Net-work Purse made by herself,  
May 4, 1793.*

My gentle Anne, whom heretofore,  
When I was young, and thou no more  
Than plaything for a nurse,  
I danced and fondled on my knee,  
A kitten both in size and glee!  
I thank thee for my Purse:

Gold pays the worth of all things here;  
But not of love;—that gem's too dear  
For richest rogues to win it;  
I, therefore, as a proof of love,  
Esteem thy present far above  
The best things kept within it.

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To Mrs. KING,

*On her kind Present to the Author—a Patch-work Counterpane  
of her own making.*

The bard, if e'er he feel at all,  
Must sure be quicken'd by a call  
Both on his heart and head,  
To pay, with tuneful thanks, the care  
And kindness of a lady fair,  
Who deigns to deck his bed.

A bed like this, in ancient time,  
On Ida's barren top sublime,  
(As Homer's epic shows)  
Composed of sweetest vernal flow'rs,  
Without the aid of sun or show'rs,  
For Jove and Juno rose.

Less beautiful, however gay,  
Is that, which in the scorching day  
Receives the weary swain;  
Who, laying his long scythe aside,  
Sleeps on some bank, with daisies pied,  
'Till rous'd to toil again.



What labours of the loom I see!  
 Looms numberless have groan'd for me:  
     Should ev'ry maiden come  
 To scramble for the patch that bears  
 The impress of the robe she wears,  
     The bell would toll for some.

And O! what havoc would ensue!  
 This bright display of ev'ry hue  
     All in a moment fled!  
 As if a storm should strip the bowers  
 Of all their tendrils, leaves, and flowers,  
     Each pocketing a shred.

Thanks, then, to ev'ry gentle fair  
 Who will not come to pick me bare  
     As bird of borrow'd feather;  
 And thanks to one, above them all,  
 The gentle fair of Pirtenhall,  
     Who put THE WHOLE TOGETHER.

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### GRATITUDE.

*Addressed to Lady HESKETH.*

This cap, that so stately appears,  
     With ribbon-bound tassel on high,  
 Which seems, by the crest that it rears,  
     Ambitious of brushing the sky:  
 This cap to my cousin I owe,  
     She gave it, and gave me beside,  
 Wreath'd into an elegant bow,  
     The ribbon with which it is tied.

This wheel-footed studying chair,  
     Contriv'd both for toil and repose,  
 Wide-elbow'd, and wadded with hair,  
     In which I both scribble and doze,  
 Bright-studded to dazzle the eyes,  
     And rival in lustre of that,  
 In which, or astronomy lies,  
     Fair Cassiopeia sat.

These carpets, so soft to the foot,  
 Caledonia's traffic and pride,  
 Oh spare them, ye knights of the boot !  
 Escap'd from a cross-country ride !  
 This table and mirror within,  
 Secure from collision and dust,  
 At which I oft shave cheek and chin,  
 And periwig nicely adjust.

This moveable structure of shelves,  
 For its beauty admired and its use,  
 And charged with octavos and twelves,  
 The gayest I had to produce,  
 Where, flaming in scarlet and gold,  
 My poems enchanted I view,  
 And hope, in due time, to behold  
 My Iliad and Odyssey too.

This china, that decks the alcove,  
 Which here people call a beaufette,  
 But what the gods call it above  
 Has ne'er been reveal'd to us yet :  
 These curtains, that keep the room warm,  
 Or cool, as the season demands ;  
 Those stoves, that, for pattern and form,  
 Seem the labour of Mulciber's hands.

All these are not half that I owe  
 To one from our earliest youth,  
 To me ever ready to show  
 Benignity, friendship, and truth :  
 For Time, the destroyer, declared,  
 And foe of our perishing kind,  
 If even her face he has spared,  
 Much less could he alter her mind.

Thus compass'd about with the goods  
 And chattels of leisure and ease,  
 I indulge my poetical moods  
 In many such fancies as these :  
 And fancies I fear they will seem,  
 Poets' goods are not often so fine ;  
 The poets will swear that I dream,  
 When I sing of the splendour of mine.

Though Cowper could occasionally trifle in rhyme, for the sake of amusing his friends, with an affectionate and endearing gaiety, he appears most truly himself when he exerts his poetical talents for the higher purpose of consoling the afflicted. Witness the following epistle, composed at the request of Lady Austen, to console a particular friend of hers. Twenty-five letters, written by Mrs. Billacoys, the lady to whom the poem is addressed, were inserted in an early volume of the Theological Miscellany, in which the poem also appeared. Mr. Bull has annexed it to Cowper's translations from the spiritual songs of Madame Guion, but I willingly embrace the opportunity of re-printing it in this volume, from a copy corrected by the author, in the pleasing persuasion that it must prove to all religious readers, acquainted with affliction, a lenient charm of very powerful effect.

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#### EPISTLE TO A LADY IN FRANCE.

*A Person of great Piety, and much afflicted.*

Madam! a stranger's purpose in these lays  
Is to congratulate, and not to praise;  
To give the creature the Creator's due,  
Were guilt in me, and an offence to you.  
From man to man, and e'en to woman paid,  
Praise is the medium of a knavish trade,  
A coin by craft for folly's use design'd,  
Spurious, and only current with the blind.

The path of sorrow, and that path alone,  
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown;  
No trav'ller ever reach'd that blest abode,  
Who found not thorns and briars on his road.  
The world may dance along the flowery plain,  
Cheer'd as they go by many a sprightly strain,  
Where nature has her yielding mosses spread,  
With unshod feet, and yet unharm'd, they tread,  
Admonish'd, scorn the caution, and the friend,  
Bent all on pleasure, heedless of its end.  
But He who knew what human hearts would prove,  
How slow to learn the dictates of his love;  
That hard by nature, and of stubborn will,  
A life of ease would make them harder still;

In pity to a chosen few, design'd  
 T' escape the common ruin of their kind,  
 Call'd for a cloud to darken all their years,  
 And said—Go spend them in the vale of tears!

Oh balmy gales of soul-reviving air!  
 Oh salutary streams that murmur there!  
 These flowing from the fount of grace above,  
 Those breath'd from lips of everlasting love!  
 The flinty soil, indeed, their feet annoys,  
 Chill blasts of trouble nip their springing joys.  
 An envious world will interpose its frown,  
 To mar delights superior to its own,  
 And many a pang, experienc'd still within,  
 Reminds them of their hated inmate, sin!  
 But ills of every shape, of every name,  
 Transform'd to blessings, miss their cruel aim;  
 And every moment's calm, that soothes the breast,  
 Is given in earnest of eternal rest.

Ah! be not sad, although thy lot be cast  
 Far from the flock, and in a boundless waste;  
 No shepherds' tents within thy view appear,  
 But the chief Shepherd even there is near:  
 Thy tender sorrows and thy plaintive strain  
 Flow in a foreign land, but not in vain.  
 Thy tears all issue from a source divine,  
 And every drop bespeaks a Saviour thine.

So once, in Gideon's fleece, the dews were found,  
 And drought on all the drooping flocks around.

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It may be observed, to the honour of the poet, that his extreme shyness and dislike of addressing an absolute stranger did not preclude him from a free and happy use of his mental powers, when he had a prospect of comforting the distressed. His diffidence was often wonderfully great, but his humanity was greater.

Diffident as Cowper was by nature, though a poet, he wanted not the becoming resolution to defend his poetical opinions, when he felt them to be just; particularly on the structure of English verse, which he had examined with the eye of a master. As a proof of his resolution, I transcribe, with pleasure, a passage from one of his earliest letters to his bookseller, Mr. Johnson.

It happened that some accidental reviser of the manuscript had taken the liberty to alter a line in a poem of Cowper's. This liberty drew from the offended poet the following very just and animated remonstrance, which I am anxious to preserve, because it elucidates, with great felicity of expression, his deliberate ideas on English versification.

“ I did not write the line, that has been tampered with, hastily, or without due attention to the construction of it ; and what appeared to me its only merit is, in its present state, entirely annihilated.

“ I know that the ears of modern verse-writers are delicate to an excess, and their readers are troubled with the same squeamishness as themselves : so that if a line do not run as smooth as quicksilver, they are offended. A critic of the present day serves a poem as a cook serves a dead turkey, when she fastens the legs of it to a post, and draws out all the sinews. For this we may thank Pope : but unless we could imitate him in the closeness and compactness of his expression, as well as in the smoothness of his numbers, we had better drop the imitation, which serves no other purpose than to emasculate and weaken all we write. Give me a manly rough line, with a deal of meaning in it, rather than a whole poem full of musical periods, that have nothing but their oily smoothness to recommend them.

“ I have said thus much, as I hinted in the beginning, because I have just finished a much longer poem than the last, which our common friend will receive by the same messenger that has charge of this letter. In that poem there are many lines which an ear so nice as the gentleman's who made the above mentioned alteration would undoubtedly condemn, and yet (if I may be permitted to say it) they cannot be made smoother without being the worse for it. There is a roughness on a plumb which nobody that understands fruit would rub off, though the plumb would be much more polished without it. But lest I tire you, I will only add, that I wish you to guard me for the future from all such meddling ; assuring you that I always write as smoothly as I can, but that I never did, never will, sacrifice the spirit or sense of a passage to the sound of it.”

In showing with what proper spirit the poet could occasionally vindicate his own verse, let me observe, that although he frequently speaks in his letters with humorous asperity concerning critics, no man could be more willing to receive, with becoming modesty and gratitude, the friendly assistance of just and tempe-



rate criticism. Some proofs of this humility, so laudable, if not uncommon in poets of great powers, I shall seize this opportunity of producing, in a few extracts from a series of the author's letters to his bookseller.

*Weston, Feb. 11, 1790.*

DEAR SIR,

I am very sensibly obliged by the remarks of Mr. Fuseli, and beg that you will tell him so: they afford me opportunities of improvement which I shall not neglect. When he shall see the press-copy, he will be convinced of this, and will be convinced likewise, that, smart as he sometimes is, he spares me often when I have no mercy on myself. He will see, in short, almost a new translation. \* \* \* I assure you faithfully, that whatever my faults may be, to be easily or hastily satisfied with what I have written is not one of them.

*Sept. 7, 1790.*

It grieves me that, after all, I am obliged to go into public without the whole advantage of Mr. Fuseli's judicious strictures. My only consolation is, that I have not forfeited them by my own impatience. Five years are no small portion of a man's life, especially at the latter end of it, and in those five years, being a man of almost no engagements, I have done more in the way of hard work than most could have done in twice the number. I beg you to present my compliments to Mr. Fuseli, with many and sincere thanks for the services that his own more important occupations would allow him to render me.

It is a singular spectacle for those who love to contemplate the progress of social arts, to observe a foreigner, who has raised himself to high rank in the arduous profession of a painter, correcting, and thanked for correcting the chief poet of England in his English version of Homer.

From the series of letters now before me, I cannot resist the temptation of transcribing two more passages, because they display the disposition of Cowper in a very amiable point of view. The first relates to Mr. Newton—the second to Mr. Johnson himself.

*Weston, Oct. 3, 1790.*

Mr. Newton having again requested that the preface which he wrote for my first volume may be prefixed to

it, I am desirous to gratify him in a particular that so emphatically bespeaks his friendship for me ; and should my books see another edition, shall be obliged to you if you will add it accordingly.

I beg that you will not suffer your reverence, either for Homer or his translator, to check your continual examinations. I never knew, with certainty, till now, that the marginal strictures I found in the Task-proofs were yours. The justness of them, and the benefit I derived from them, are fresh in my memory, and I doubt not that their utility will be the same in the present instance.

*Weston, Oct. 30, 1790.*

I am anxious to preserve this singular anecdote, as it is honourable both to the modest poet, and to his intelligent bookseller.

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But let me recall the reader's attention to the letter, in which the poet delivered so forcibly his own ideas of English versification.

This letter leads me to suggest a reason why some readers imagine that the rhyme of Cowper is not equal to his blank verse. Their idea arises from his not copying the melody of Pope: but from this he deviated by design, and his character of Pope, in the Poem of Table-Talk, may, when added to this letter, completely unfold to us his reasons for doing so. The lines to which I allude are these:

Then Pope, as harmony itself exact,  
 In verse well disciplin'd, complete, compact,  
 Gave virtue and morality a grace,  
 That, quite eclipsing pleasure's painted face,  
 Levied a tax of wonder and applause,  
 E'en on the fools that trampled on their laws :  
 But he (his musical finesse was such,  
 So nice his ear, so delicate his touch)  
 Made poetry a mere mechanic art,  
 And every warbler has his tune by heart.

Cowper conceived that Pope, by adhering too closely to the use of pure Iambic feet in his verse, deprived himself of an advantage to be gained by a more liberal admission of other feet, and particularly Spondees, which, according to Cowper's idea, have a very

happy effect in giving variety, dignity, and force. He exemplifies his idea by exclaiming, in the following couplet of the same poem,

Give me the line that ploughs its stately course  
Like a proud swan, conquering the stream by force.

It is, however, remarkable, that Cowper, in his Poem on the Nativity, from the French of Madame Guion, seems to have chosen the style of Pope, which, on other occasions, he had rather tried to avoid. His versification in the poem just mentioned, affords a complete proof that, in rhyme, as in blank verse, he could at once be easy, forcible, and melodious.

Churchill had before objected to an excess of unvaried excellence in the verses of Pope: an objection that appears rather fastidious than reasonable. Happy the poet whose antagonist can only say of his language, that it is too musical, and of his fancy, that it is too much under the guidance of reason! Such are the charges by which even scholars and critics, of acknowledged taste and good nature, have, from the influence of accidental prejudice, endeavoured to lessen the poetical eminence of Pope; a poet remarkably unfortunate in his numerous biographers: for Ruffhead, whom Warburton employed in a task, which gratitude might have taught him to execute better himself, is neglected as dull: Johnson, though he nobly and eloquently vindicates the dignity of the poet, yet betrays a perpetual inclination to render him contemptible as a man: and Warton, though by nature one of the most candid and liberal of critics, continues, as a biographer, to indulge that prejudice which had early induced him, in his popular Essay on this illustrious poet, to endeavour to sink him a little in the scale of poetical renown: not, I believe, from any envious motive, but as an affectionate compliment to his friend Young, the patron to whom he inscribed his Essay.

Of this continued prejudice, which this good natured critic was himself very far from perceiving, he exhibits a remarkable proof in his Life of Pope, by the following facetious severity on the translation of Homer.

“No two things can be so unlike as the Iliad of Homer and the Iliad of Pope: to colour the images, to point the sentences, to lavish Ovidian graces on the simple Grecian, is to put a bag-wig on Mr. Townley’s fine busto of the venerable old bard.”

This sentence has all the sprightly pleasantry of my amiable old friend: but to prove that it is critically unjust, the reader has only to observe that Pope is very far from having produced that ludicrous

effect which the comparison of the critic supposes. Spectators must laugh, indeed, at a bust of Homer enveloped in a wig; but the reader has not a disposition to laughter in reading the Iliad of Pope. On the contrary, in many, many passages, where it deviates widely from the original, a reader of taste and candour admires both the dexterity and the dignity of the translator; and if he allows the version to be unfaithful, yet, with Mr. Twining, (the accomplished translator of Aristotle, who has justly and gracefully applied an expressive Latin verse to this glorious translation, so bitterly branded with the epithet unfaithful) he tenderly exclaims,

“*Perfida, sed quamvis perfida, cara tamen.*”

I have been induced, by a sense of what is due to the great works of real genius, to take the part of Pope against the lively injustice of a departed friend, for whose literary talents, and for whose social character, I still retain the sincerest regard. The delight and the improvement derived from such noble works as the Homer of Pope, ought to guard every scholar against any partialities of friendship that can render him blind to the predominant merits, or severe to the petty imperfections of such a work. Predominant merits and petty imperfections are certainly to be found in the translation of Pope. These are temperately and judiciously displayed in the liberal essay of that gentle and amiable critic, Spense, on the Odyssey; who, though he was rather partial to blank verse, yet regarded Pope's Homer as a work entitled to great admiration. It is, indeed, a work so truly admirable, that I should be sorry if the more faithful version of my favourite friend could materially injure the honour of its author: but between Pope and Cowper there is no contest: “They are performers on different instruments,” as Cowper has very properly remarked himself, in the preface to his own translation.

We may apply to the two translators, therefore, the comprehensive Latin words that Gibbon applied to two eminent lawyers, “*Magis pares, quam similes;*” but of the two translators it may be added, that each has attained such a degree of excellence in the mode he adopted, as will probably remain unsurpassed for ever. Instead, therefore, of endeavouring to decide which is entitled to the greater portion of praise, a reader, who has derived great pleasure from both, may rather wish (for the embellishment and honour of the English language) that it may exhibit a double version of every great ancient poet, perfectly equal in spirit and beauty to the Homers of Pope and of Cowper. My impartial esteem for the merits of these two pre-eminent translators had al-

most tempted me to introduce in this composition a minute display of their alternate successes and failures in many most striking passages of Homer; but, on reflection, it appears to me, that such a comparison, if fairly and extensively conducted, would form an episode too large for the body of my work, and the spirit of my departed friend seemed to admonish me against it, in the following words of his Grecian favourite:

Μητ' αὖ με μάλ' αἰνεε, μητε τι νεικεε  
 Εἰδῶσι γὰρ τοὶ ταῦτα μετ' Ἀργείοις ἀγορεύεις.

“Neither praise me much, nor blame,  
 For these are Grecians in whose ears thou speak'st,  
 And know me well.”

*Cowper's Homer's Iliad, 10.*

I will therefore confine myself to the general result of such a comparison, and I am persuaded that all unprejudiced scholars, who may amuse themselves by pursuing the comparison, will find the result to be this: that both the English poets have rendered noble justice to their original, taken altogether; that, in separate parts, each translator has frequently sunk beneath him, and each, in their happier moments, surpassed the model which they endeavoured to copy.

Pope had partners in the latter portion of his work: Cowper accomplished his mighty labour by his own exertions: and he seems to have taken an honest pleasure in recording, with his own hand, the time and the pains that he bestowed on his translation.

In the copy of Clarke's Homer, which he valued particularly as the gift of his friend, Mr. Rose, he inserted the following memorandum.

“My translation of the Iliad I began on the twenty-first day of November, in the year 1784, and finished the translation of the Odyssey on the twenty-fifth day of August, 1790. During eight months of this time I was hindered by indisposition, so that I have been occupied in the work, on the whole, five years and one month.—WM. COWPER.

“Mem: I gave the work another revisal while it was in the press, which I finished March 4, 1791.”

When we add to this account all the time which he gave to preparations for his second edition, it will hardly be hyperbolic to



say, that this deeply studied version of Homer was, like the siege of Troy, a work of ten years. Nor will this time appear wonderful, when we recollect how determined Cowper was to be as minutely faithful as possible to the exact sense of his original. The following passage from one of his letters to Mr. Park will show how much he gratified his own mind by such scrupulous fidelity. In thanking his friend for a present of Chapman's Iliad, he says:

“ *Weston, July 15, 1793.*

“ I have consulted him in one passage of some difficulty, and find him giving a sense of his own, not at all warranted by the words of Homer. Pope sometimes does this, and sometimes omits the difficult part entirely. I can boast of having done neither, though it has cost me infinite pains to exempt myself from the necessity.”

The late Mr. Wakefield, in re-publishing Pope's Homer, has mentioned Cowper's superior fidelity to his original with the liberal praise of a scholar; but he falls, I think, into injudicious severity on the structure of his verse—a severity the more remarkable, as he warmly censures Boswell for *unfeeling petulance* and *insolent dogmatism*, in speaking of Cowper's translation. Mr. Wakefield, though a man of extensive learning and acute sensibility, appears to me in some measure unjust both to Cowper and to Pope. He labours to prove that Pope was miserably defective in the knowledge of Greek, and questions the exactitude of Lord Bathurst's testimony, in the anecdote that seemed to vindicate the translator's acquaintance with the original. It is in my power to strengthen the credibility of that anecdote by a circumstance within my own memory, which I mention with pleasure, to refute a strange uncandid supposition, that Pope did not read himself the Greek which he profest to translate, but trusted entirely to other translators. Many years ago I had in my hands a small edition of Homer, (Greek, without Latin) and it was the very copy that Pope used in his translation. It had a few memorandums in his own hand-writing, ascertaining the lines he translated on such and such days. I might have bought the book for a price considerably above its usual value, but I was at the time unhappily infected with Warton's prejudice against the genius of Pope, and from the influence of that prejudice I failed to purchase a book which, “on my mended judgment, if I offend not to say it is mended,” I should have rejoiced to acquire by doubling the price. May this petty anecdote be a warning to every literary youth, of an ardent spirit, not to adopt too hastily ideas that may lessen his regard for such

celebrated writers as time and experience will probably endear to his more cultivated mind.

It is, indeed, a prejudice not uncommon in the literary world, that little respect is due to poetical translators. The learned and amiable Jortin says, in his *Life of Erasmus*, "The translating of poets into other languages, and into verse, seems to be an occupation beneath a good poet; a work in which there is much labour and little honour."

Jortin was led to this idea by some expressions in a letter from Erasmus to Eobanus Hessus, who translated Homer into very animated Latin verse. As that translator did not employ a living language in his version of the great poet, his correspondent might justly apprehend that the credit of his work would not be answerable to its labour. But surely the case is very different, when poets, who have gained reputation by original works in a modern language, devote their talents to make their countrymen, learned or unlearned, easily and agreeably intimate with the poetical favourites of the ancient world.

Jortin presumes that pecuniary advantage must be a primary motive with a translator of extensive works; but there is a nobler incentive to such composition, and one that, I am persuaded, was very forcibly felt both by Pope and Cowper: I mean the generous gratification that a feeling spirit enjoys in a fair prospect of adding new lustre to the glory of a favourite author, to whom he has been often indebted for inexhaustible delight. He labours, indeed; but he frequently labours

"Studio fallente laborem."

Yet the magnitude of such works entitles them to no ordinary praise, when they are accomplished with considerable success. Every nation ought to think itself highly indebted to translators who enrich their native language by works of such merit as the Homers of Pope and of Cowper, because a long translation to the greatest masters of poetical diction is a sort of fatiguing dance performed in fetters. It certainly was so to Pope, and even to Cowper, whose versification, in his Homer, though so excellent that it gives to his translation what Johnson calls the first excellence of a translator, "to be read with pleasure by those who know not the original," yet seems not, in every part, to have that exquisite union of force, freedom and fluency, which is felt so delightfully through all the books of the *Task*. It is there that the versification of Cowper is most truly Homeric, that it perpetually displays what Plutarch describes as the characteristic of

Homer's verse, compared with that of Antimachus, "a certain charm, superadded to other graces and power, an appearance of having been executed with dexterous facility."\*

Perhaps of all poets, ancient and modern, Homer, and Cowper in his original composition, exhibit this charm in the highest degree. They both have the gift of speaking in verse, as if poetry were their native tongue.

The poetical powers of the latter were indeed a gift, and his use of them was worthy of the veneration which he felt towards the giver of every good. He has accomplished, as a poet, the sublimest object of poetical ambition—he has dissipated the general prejudice that held it hardly possible for a modern author to succeed in sacred poetry—he has proved that verse and devotion are natural allies—he has shown that true poetical genius cannot be more honourably or more delightfully employed than in diffusing through the heart and mind of man, a filial affection for his Maker, with a firm and cheerful trust in his word. He has sung in a strain equal to the subject, the blessed Advent of universal peace; and perhaps the temperate enthusiasm of friendship may not appear too presumptuous in supposing that his poetry will have no inconsiderable influence in preparing the world for a consummation so devoutly to be wished.

Those who are little inclined to attribute such mighty powers to modern verse may yet allow, that the more the works of Cowper are read, the more his readers will find reason to admire the variety and the extent, the graces and the energy of his literary talents. The universal admiration excited by these will be heightened and endeared, to the friends of virtue, by the obvious reflection, that his writings, excellent as they appear, were excelled by the gentleness, the benevolence, and the sanctity of his life. To the merits of such a life, I could wish that a more early intimacy with my departed friend had enabled me to render more ample justice; but affection has made me industrious in my endeavours to supply, from the purest sources of intelligence, all the deficiency of my personal knowledge; and in composing this cordial tribute to a man whose history is so universally interesting, my chief ambition has been to deserve the approbation of his pure spirit, who appeared to me on earth among the most amiable of earthly friends, and

\* Η μὲν Ἀντιμαχὲ ποιητὴς καὶ τὰ Διονυσίᾳ ζῶντα φησὶ ζωγράφηματα, τῶν Κολοφώνων ἰσχυρὰ ἔχοντα καὶ τοῖον ἐκθεσιασμένοις καὶ καταπονοῖς εἶσι: ταῖς δὲ Νικομαχὲ γραφαῖς καὶ τοῖς Ὀμηρῶν στίχοις μετὰ τῆς ἀλλῆς δυνάμεως καὶ χαρίτος, προσεστί το δοκεῖν εὐχερῶς καὶ ῥαδίως ἀπειργασθαι.

whom I cherish a lively hope of beholding in a state of happier existence, with the spirits of "just men made perfect." Pardon me, thou tenderest of mortals, if I have praised thee with a warmth of affection that might appear to thy diffident nature to border on excess. I am not conscious that I have, in the slightest particular, over-stepped the modesty of truth; but, lest expressions of my own should have a more questionable shape, I will close this imperfect, though affectionate memorial, by applying to thee those tender and beautiful verses which Cowley (one of thy favourite poets) addressed to a poetical brother, in all points, perhaps, and assuredly in genius, by many degrees, thy inferior.

Long did the Muses banish'd slaves abide,  
 And build vain pyramids to mortal pride:  
 Like Moses, thou (though spells and charms withstand)  
 Hast brought them nobly home, back to their holy land.  
 Poet and Saint, to thee are justly given,  
 The two most sacred names of Earth and Heaven.

## POSTSCRIPT.

IT has been once more my lot, during the process of printing an extensive work, to lose a friend whom I had anxiously hoped to please with a sight of my completed publication. I allude to Lady Austen, whose name is justly mentioned with honour in the *Life of Cowper*, as she possessed and exerted an influence so happily favourable to the genius of the poet. Before I began the present work, I had the pleasure and the advantage to form a personal acquaintance with this lady: she favoured me, in a very graceful and obliging manner, with much valuable information, and with some highly interesting materials for the history of our friend, who had sportively given her the title of sister, and who, while their intercourse lasted, treated her with all the tenderness and all the confidence of a brother.

Her maiden name was Richardson: she was married, very early in life, to Sir Robert Austen, Baronet, and resided with him in France, where he died. Her intercourse with Cowper is already related. In a subsequent period she was married to a native of France, Mr. De Tardif, a gentleman and a poet, who has expressed, in many elegant French verses, his just and deep sense

of her accomplished, endearing character. In visiting Paris with him, in the course of the last summer, she sunk under the fatigue of the excursion, and died in that city on the twelfth of August, 1802.

My obligations to her kindness induce me to terminate this brief account of a person so cordially regarded by Cowper, and so instrumental to the existence of his greatest work, with an offering of respect and gratitude, in the shape of an

#### EPITAPH.

Honour and Peace, ye guardians kindly just,  
 Fail not in duty to this hallow'd dust!  
 And mortals (all whose cultur'd spirits know  
 Joys that pure faith and heavenly verse bestow)  
 Passing this tomb, its buried inmate bless,  
 And obligation to her powers confess,  
 Who, when she grac'd this earth, in Austen's name,  
 Wak'd, in a poet, inspiration's flame!  
 Remov'd, by counsel, like the voice of spring,  
 Fetters of diffidence from Fancy's wing,  
 Sent the freed eagle in the sun to bask,  
 And from the mind of Cowper—call'd the Task!

---

I close my work with these verses, from a persuasion that I can pay no tribute to the memory of Cowper more truly acceptable to his tender spirit, than praise sincerely bestowed on the objects of his affection.





## APPENDIX.

(No. 1.)

---

### ORIGINAL POEMS.

---

To JOHN JOHNSON,

*On his presenting me with an antique Bust of HOMER.*

KINSMAN belov'd, and as a son by me,  
When I behold this fruit of thy regard,  
The sculptur'd form of my old fav'rite bard,  
I rev'rence feel for him, and love for thee.

Joy too, and grief; much joy, that there should be  
Wise men, and learn'd, who grudge not to reward,  
With some applause, my bold attempt, and hard,  
Which others scorn. Critics by courtesy!

The grief is this, that, sunk in Homer's mine,  
I lose my precious years, now soon to fail;  
Handling his gold, which, howsoe'er it shine,  
Proves dross when balanc'd in the Christian scale!

Be wiser thou!—Like our fore-father DONNE,  
Seek heavenly wealth, and work for God alone!

---

To the Reverend Mr. NEWTON,

*On his Return from Ramsgate.*

That ocean you of late survey'd,  
Those rocks I too have seen,  
But I, afflicted and dismay'd,  
You tranquil and serene.

You from the flood-controuling steep  
 Saw stretch'd before your view,  
 With conscicus joy, the threat'ning deep,  
 No longer such to you.

To me, the waves that ceaseless broke  
 Upon the dang'rous coast,  
 Hoarsely, and omincusly, spoke  
 Of all my treasure lost.

Your sea of troubles you have past,  
 And found the peaceful shore ;  
 I, tempest toss'd, and wreck'd at last,  
 Come home to port no more.

---

#### LOVE ABUSED.

What is there in the vale of life  
 Half so delightful as a wife,  
 When friendship, love, and peace combine  
 To stamp the marriage-bond divine ?  
 The stream of pure and genuine love  
 Derives its current from above ;  
 And earth a second Eden shows  
 Where'er the healing water flows :  
 But ah, if from the dykes and drains  
 Of sensual nature's fev'rish veins,  
 Lust, like a lawiess, headstrong flood,  
 Impregnated with ooze and mud,  
 Descending fast on ev'ry side,  
 Once mingles with the sacred tide,  
 Farewell the soul-enliv'ning scene !  
 The banks that wore a smiling green,  
 With rank defilement overspread,  
 Bewail their flow'ry beauties dead.  
 The stream, polluted, dark and dull,  
 Diffused into a Stygian pool,  
 Through life's last melancholy years  
 Is fed with ever-flowing tears.

Complaints supply the zephyr's part,  
 And sighs that heave a breaking heart.

## EPITAPH

*On Mr. CHESTER, of Chicheley.*

Tears flow, and cease not, where the good man lies,  
 'Till all who knew him follow to the skies.  
 Tears therefore fall, where CHESTER's ashes sleep ;  
 Him, wife, friends, brothers, children, servants weep—  
 And justly—few shall ever him transcend  
 As husband, parent, brother, master, friend.

## EPITAPH

*On Mrs. M. HIGGINS, of Weston.*

Laurels may flourish round the conqueror's tomb,  
 But happiest they who win the world to come :  
 Believers have a silent field to fight,  
 And their exploits are veil'd from human sight.  
 They in some nook, where little known they dwell,  
 Kneel, pray in faith, and rout the hosts of hell :  
 Eternal triumphs crown their toils divine,  
 And all those triumphs, Mary, now are thine.

## To Count GRAVINA.

*On his translating the Author's Song on a Rose into Italian Verse.*

My Rose, Gravina, blooms anew,  
 And steep'd not now in rain,  
 But in Castalian streams, by you,  
 Will never fade again.

## INSCRIPTION

*For a Stone, erected at the sowing of a Grove of Oaks at Chillington, the Seat of THOMAS GIFFARD, Esquire. 1790.*

Other stones the æra tell  
 When some feeble mortal fell ;  
 I stand here to date the birth  
 Of these hardy sons of earth.  
 Which shall longest brave the sky,  
 Storm, and frost?—these Oaks or I?  
 Pass an age or two away,  
 I must moulder and decay ;

But the years that crumble me  
 Shall invigorate the tree,  
 Spread the branch, dilate its size,  
 Lift its summit to the skies.

Cherish honour, virtue, truth!  
 So shalt thou prolong thy youth:  
 Wanting these, however fast  
 Man be fixt, and form'd to last,  
 He is lifeless even now,  
 Stone at heart, and cannot grow.

---

### INSCRIPTION

*For a Hermitage in the Author's Garden.*

This cabin, Mary, in my sight appears,  
 Built as it has been in our waning years,  
 A rest afforded to our weary feet,  
 Preliminary to—the last retreat.

---

### STANZAS

*On the late indecent Liberties taken with the Remains of the great  
 MILTON.—Anno 1790.*

Me too, perchance, in future days,  
 The sculptur'd stone shall show,  
 With Paphian myrtle, or with bays  
 Parnassian, on my brow.

But I, or ere that season come,  
 Escap'd from every care,  
 Shall reach my refuge in the tomb,  
 And sleep securely there.\*

So sang, in Roman tone and stile,  
 The youthful bard ere long,  
 Ordain'd to grace his native isle  
 With her sublimest song.

\* Forsitan et nostros ducat de marmore vultus  
 Nectens aut Paphia myrri aut Parnasside lauri  
 Froude comas—At ego secunda pace quiescam.

Who, then, but must conceive disdain,  
 Hearing the deed unblest  
 Of wretches who have dar'd prophane  
 His dread sepulchral rest?

Ill fare the hands that heav'd the stones  
 Where Milton's ashes lay,  
 That trembled not to grasp his bones,  
 And steal his dust away.

Oh ill requited bard! neglect  
 Thy living worth repay'd,  
 And blind idolatrous respect  
 As much affronts the dead.

---

A TALE,

*Founded on a Fact which happened in January, 1779.*

Where Humber pours his rich commercial stream,  
 There dwelt a wretch, who breath'd but to blaspheme.  
 In subterraneous caves his life he led,  
 Black as the mine, in which he wrought for bread.  
 When on a day, emerging from the deep,  
 A sabbath-day, (such sabbaths thousands keep)  
 The wages of his weekly toil he bore  
 To buy a cock, whose blood might win him more;  
 As if the noblest of the feather'd kind  
 Were but for battle, and for death design'd;  
 As if the consecrated hours were meant  
 For sport, to minds on cruelty intent:  
 It chanc'd (such chances Providence obey)  
 He met a fellow-lab'rer on the way,  
 Whose heart the same desires had once inflam'd—  
 But now the savage temper was reclaim'd.  
 Persuasion on his lips had taken place;  
 For all plead well who plead the cause of grace!  
 His iron-heart with scripture he assail'd,  
 Woo'd him to hear a sermon, and prevail'd.  
 His faithful bow the mighty preacher drew,  
 Swift, as the lightning-glimpse, the arrow flew;  
 He wept, he trembled; cast his eyes around,  
 To find a worse than he: But none he found.



He felt his sins, and wonder'd he should feel.  
 Grace made the wound, and grace alone could heal.

Now, farewell, oaths, and blasphemies, and lies!  
 He quits the sinner's, for the martyr's prize.  
 That holy day was wash'd with many a tear,  
 Gilded with hope, yet shaded too by fear.  
 The next, his swarthy brethren of the mine  
 Learn'd by his alter'd speech—the change divine!  
 Laugh'd when they should have wept, and swore the day  
 Was nigh, when he would swear as fast as they.  
 “No,” said the penitent, “such words shall share  
 “This breath no more, devoted now to pray'r.  
 “Oh! if thou seest, (thine eye the future sees)  
 “That I shall yet again blaspheme, like these;  
 “Now strike me to the ground, on which I kneel,  
 “Ere yet this heart relapses into steel;  
 “Now take me to that Heav'n I once defy'd,  
 “Thy presence, thy embrace!”—He spoke, and dy'd!

---

A TALE.

In Scotland's realm, where trees are few,  
 Nor even shrubs abound;  
 But where, however bleak the view,  
 Some better things are found;

For husband there and wife may boast  
 Their union undefil'd;  
 And false ones are as rare almost  
 As hedge-rows in the wild:

In Scotland's realm, forlorn and bare,  
 This hist'ry chanc'd of late—  
 This hist'ry of a wedded pair,  
 A chaffinch and his mate.

The spring drew near, each felt a breast  
 With genial instinct fill'd;  
 They pair'd, and only wish'd a nest,  
 But found not where to build.

The heaths uncover'd, and the moors,  
Except with snow and sleet;  
Sea-beaten rocks and naked shores  
Could yield them no retreat.

Long time a breeding place they sought,  
'Till both grew vex'd and tir'd;  
At length a ship arriving, brought  
The good so long desir'd.

A ship!—could such a restless thing  
Afford them place to rest?  
Or was the merchant charg'd to bring  
The homeless birds a nest?

Hush!—silent hearers profit most!—  
This racer of the sea  
Prov'd kinder to them than the coast—  
It serv'd them with a tree.

But such a tree! 'twas shaven deal;  
The tree they call a mast,  
And had a hollow with a wheel,  
Through which the tackle pass'd.

Within that cavity aloft  
Their roofless home they fixt;  
Form'd with materials neat and soft,  
Bents, wool, and feathers mixt.

Four iv'ry eggs soon pave its floor,  
With russet specks bedight:—  
The vessel weighs—forsakes the shore,  
And lessens to the sight.

The mother bird is gone to sea,  
As she had chang'd her kind;  
But goes the mate? Far wiser, he  
Is doubtless left behind.

No!—Soon as from ashore he saw  
The winged mansion move;  
He flew to reach it, by a law  
Of never-failing love!

Then perching at his consort's side,  
 Was briskly borne along;  
 The billows and the blasts defied,  
 And cheer'd her with a song.

The seaman, with sincere delight,  
 His feather'd shipmate eyes,  
 Scarce less exulting in the sight,  
 Than when he tows a prize.

For seamen much believe in signs,  
 And from a chance so new,  
 Each some approaching good divines,  
 And may his hopes be true!

Hail, honour'd land! a desert, where  
 Not even birds can hide,  
 Yet parent of this loving pair,  
 Whom nothing could divide.

And ye, who rather than resign  
 Your matrimonial plan;  
 Were not afraid to plough the brine  
 In company with man.

To whose lean country, much disdain  
 We English often show;  
 Yet from a richer, nothing gain  
 But wantonness and woe.

Be it your fortune, year by year,  
 The same resource to prove;  
 And may ye, sometimes landing here,  
 Instruct us how to love!

---

This tale is founded on an anecdote which the author found in the Buckinghamshire Herald, for Saturday, June 1, 1793, in the following words.

*Glasgow, May 23d.*

In a block or pully, near the head of the mast of a gabert, now lying at the Broomielaw, there is a chaffinch's nest and four eggs. The nest was built while the vessel lay at Greenock, and was

followed hither by both birds. Though the block is occasionally lowered for the inspection of the curious, the birds have not forsaken the nest. The cock, however, visits the nest but seldom, while the hen never leaves it but when she descends to the hulk for food.

---

STANZAS,

*Addressed to Lady HESKETH, by a Lady, in returning a Poem of Mr. COWPER's, lent to the Writer on Condition she should neither show it, nor take a Copy.*

What wonder! if my wavering hand  
 Had dar'd to disobey,  
 When Hesketh gave a harsh command,  
 And Cowper led astray?

Then take this tempting gift of thine,  
 By pen uncopied yet:  
 But can'st thou, Memory, confine,  
 Or teach me to forget?

More lasting than the touch of art  
 Her characters remain;  
 When written by a feeling heart  
 On tablets of the brain.

*COWPER's Reply.*

To be remember'd thus is fame,  
 And in the first degree;  
 And did the few, like her, the same,  
 The press might rest for me.

So Homer, in the memory stor'd  
 Of many a Grecian belle,  
 Was once preserv'd—a richer hoard,  
 But never lodg'd so well.

## APPENDIX.

(No. 2.)

---

### TRANSLATIONS OF GREEK VERSES.

---

*From the Greek of JULIANUS.*

A SPARTAN, his companions slain,  
Alone from battle fled ;  
His mother, kindling with disdain  
That she had borne him, struck him dead :

For courage, and not birth alone,  
In Sparta, testifies a son.

---

*On the same, by PALLADAS.*

A Spartan, 'scaping from the fight,  
His mother met him in his flight,  
Upheld a falchion to his breast,  
And thus the fugitive address'd :

“ Thou can’st but live to blot with shame  
“ Indelible thy mother’s name,  
“ While ev’ry breath that thou shalt draw  
“ Offends against thy country’s law :  
“ But if thou perish by this hand,  
“ Myself, indeed, throughout the land,  
“ To my dishonour shall be known  
“ The mother still of such a son ;  
“ But Sparta will be safe and free,  
“ And that shall serve to comfort me.”



## AN EPITAPH.

My name—my country—what are they to thee?  
 What—whether base or proud, my pedigree?  
 Perhaps I far surpass'd all other men—  
 Perhaps I fell below them all—what then?  
 Suffice it, stranger, that thou see'st a tomb—  
 Thou know'st its use—it hides—no matter whom.

—  
*Another.*

Take to thy bosom, gentle earth, a swain  
 With much hard labour in thy service worn.  
 He set the vines that clothe yon ample plain,  
 And he these olives that the vale adorn.

He fill'd with grain the glebe, the rills he led  
 Through this green herbage, and those fruitful bow'rs:  
 Thou, therefore, Earth, lie lightly on his head,  
 His hoary head, and deck his grave with flow'rs.

—  
*Another.*

Painter, this likeness is too strong,  
 And we shall mourn the dead too long.

—  
*Another.*

At three-score winters end I died  
 A cheerless being, sole and sad;  
 The nuptial knot I never tied,  
 And wish my father never had.

—  
*By CALLIMACHUS.*

At morn we plac'd on his funereal bier  
 Young Melanippus; and at even-tide,  
 Unable to sustain a loss so dear,  
 By her own hand his blooming sister died.

Thus Aristippus mourn'd his noble race,  
 Annihilated by a double blow;  
 Nor son could hope, nor daughter more t' embrace,  
 And all Cyrene sadden'd at his woe.

*On MILTIADES.*

Miltiades, thy valour best  
 (Although in every region known)  
 The men of Persia can attest,  
 Taught by thyself at Marathon.

---

*On an Infant.*

Bewail not much, my parents, me, the prey  
 Of ruthless Ades, and sepulcher'd here,  
 An infant, in my fifth scarce finish'd year,  
 He found all sportive, innocent, and gay,  
 Your young Callimachus; and if I knew  
 Not many joys, my griefs were also few.

---

*By HERACLIDES.*

In Cnidus born, the consort I became  
 Of Euphron. Aretimias was my name,  
 His bed I shared, nor proved a barren bride,  
 But bore two children at a birth, and died.  
 One child I leave to solace and uphold  
 Euphron hereafter, when infirm and old;  
 And one, for his remembrance sake, I bear  
 To Pluto's realm, till he shall join me there.

---

*On the Reed.*

I was of late a barren plant,  
 Useless, insignificant,  
 Nor fig, nor grape, nor apple bore,  
 A native of the marshy shore;  
 But gather'd for poetic use,  
 And plung'd into a sable juice,  
 Of which my modicum I sip,  
 With narrow mouth and slender lip.  
 At once, although by nature dumb,  
 All-eloquent I have become,  
 And speak with fluency untired,  
 As if by Phœbus self inspired.

*To Health.*

Eldest born of pow'rs divine,  
 Blest Hygeia! be it mine  
 To enjoy what thou can'st give,  
 And henceforth with thee to live:  
 For in pow'r if pleasure be,  
 Wealth, or num'rous progeny;  
 Or in amorous embrace,  
 Where no spy infests the place;  
 Or in aught that Heav'n bestows  
 To alleviate human woes.  
 When the wearied heart despairs  
 Of a respite from its cares;  
 These and ev'ry true delight  
 Flourish only in thy sight.  
 And the sister Graces Three  
 Owe, themselves, their youth, to thee,  
 Without whom we may possess  
 Much, but never happiness.

*On the Astrologers.*

Th' Astrologers did all alike presage  
 My uncle's dying in extreme old age;  
 One only disagreed. But he was wise,  
 And spoke not till he heard the fun'ral cries.

*On an Old Woman.*

Mycilla dyes her locks, 'tis said,  
 But 'tis a foul aspersion;  
 She buys them black, they therefore need  
 No subsequent immersion.

*On Invalids.*

Far happier are the dead, methinks, than they  
 Who look for death, and fear it every day.

*On Flatterers.*

No mischief worthier of our fear  
 In nature can be found,  
 Than friendship, in ostent sincere,  
 But hollow and unsound.

For lull'd into a dang'rous dream,  
 We close infold a foe,  
 Who strikes, when most secure we seem,  
 Th' inevitable blow.

*On the Swallow.*

Attic maid! with honey fed,  
 Bear'st thou to thy callow brood  
 Yonder locust from the mead,  
 Destin'd their delicious food?

Ye have kindred voices clear,  
 Ye alike unfold the wing,  
 Migrate hither, sojourn here,  
 Both attendant on the spring.

Ah, for pity, drop the prize;  
 Let it not, with truth, be said  
 That a songster gasps and dies,  
 That a songster may be fed.

*On late acquired Wealth.*

Poor in my youth, and in life's later scenes  
 Rich to no end, I curse my natal hour;  
 Who nought enjoy'd, while young, denied the means;  
 And nought, when old, enjoy'd, denied the pow'r.

*On a true Friend.*

Hast thou a friend? Thou hast, indeed,  
 A rich and large supply,  
 Treasure to serve your ev'ry need,  
 Well-manag'd, till you die.

*On a Bath, by PLATO.*

Did Cytherea to the skies  
 From this pellucid lymph arise?  
 Or was it Cytherea's touch,  
 When bathing here, that made it such?

*On a Fowler, by ISIDORUS.*

With seeds and bird-lime, from the desert air,  
 Eumelus gather'd free, though scanty fare.  
 No lordly patron's hand he deign'd to kiss,  
 Nor luxury knew, save liberty, nor bliss.  
 Thrice thirty years he liv'd, and to his heirs  
 His reeds bequeath'd, his bird-lime, and his snares.

*On NIOBE.*

Charon, receive a family on board,  
 Itself sufficient for thy crazy yawl;  
 Apollo and Diana, for a word  
 By me too proudly spoken, slew us all.

*On a good Man.*

Traveller, regret not me; for thou shalt find  
 Just cause of sorrow none in my decease,  
 Who, dying, children's children left behind;  
 And with one wife liv'd many a year in peace.  
 Three virtuous youths espoused my daughters three,  
 And oft their infants in my bosom lay;  
 Nor saw I one of all derived from me  
 Touch'd with disease, or torn by death away.  
 Their duteous hands my fun'ral rites bestow'd,  
 And me my blameless manners fitted well  
 To seek it, sent to the serene abode  
 Where shades of pious men for ever dwell.



*On a Miser.*

They call thee rich, I deem thee poor—  
 Since, if thou dar'st not use thy store,  
 But sav'st it only for thine heirs,  
 The treasure is not thine, but theirs.

*Another.*

A Miser, traversing his house,  
 Espied, unusual there, a mouse,  
 And thus his uninvited guest,  
 Briskly inquisitive, address'd:  
 "Tell me, my dear, to what cause is it  
 "I owe this unexpected visit?"  
 The mouse her host obliquely eyed,  
 And, smiling, pleasantly replied,  
 "Fear not, good fellow, for your hoard,  
 "I come to lodge, and not to board."

*Another.*

Art thou some individual of a kind  
 Long-liv'd by nature as the rook or hind?  
 Heap treasure, then, for if thy need be such,  
 Thou hast excuse, and scarce can'st heap too much.  
 But man thou seem'st; clear therefore from thy breast  
 This lust of treasure—folly at the best!  
 For why should'st thou go wasted to the tomb,  
 To fatten with thy spoils, thou know'st not whom?

*On Female Inconstancy.*

Rich, thou had'st many lovers—poor, hast none,  
 So surely want extinguishes the flame;  
 And she who call'd thee once her pretty one,  
 And her Adonis, now inquires thy name.

Where wast thou born, Sosicrates, and where,  
 In what strange country can thy parents live,  
 Who seem'st, by thy complaints, not yet aware  
 That want's a crime no woman can forgive?

—•—  
*On the Grasshopper.*

Happy songster, perch'd above  
 On the summit of the grove,  
 Whom a dew-drop cheers to sing  
 With the freedom of a king.  
 From thy perch survey the fields  
 Where prolific nature yields  
 Nought that willingly as she,  
 Man surrenders not to thee.  
 For hostility or hate  
 None thy pleasures can create.  
 Thee it satisfies to sing  
 Sweetly the return of Spring;  
 Herald of the genial hours,  
 Harming neither herbs nor flow'rs.  
 Therefore man thy voice attends  
 Gladly—thou and he are friends;  
 Nor thy never-ceasing strains,  
 Phæbus or the muse disdains,  
 As too simple or too long,  
 For themselves inspire the song.  
 Earth-born, bloodless, undecaying,  
 Ever singing, sporting, playing,  
 What has nature else to show  
 Godlike in its kind as thou?

—•—  
*On HERMOCRATIA.*

Hermocratia named—save only one,  
 Twice fifteen births I bore, and buried none.  
 For neither Phæbus pierc'd my thriving joys,  
 Nor Dian—she my girls, or he my boys.  
 But Dian rather, when my daughters lay  
 In parturition, chas'd their pangs away;  
 And all my sons, by Phæbus' bounty, shared  
 A vig'rous youth, by sickness unimpaired.  
 Oh Niobe! far less prolific, see  
 Thy boast against Latona sham'd by me!

*From MENANDER.*

Fond youth, who dream'st that hoarded gold  
 Is needful, not alone to pay  
 For all thy various items sold  
 To serve the wants of ev'ry day—

Bread, vinegar, and oil, and meat,  
 For sav'ry viands season'd high,  
 But somewhat more important yet—  
 I tell thee what it cannot buy.

No treasure, had'st thou more amass'd  
 Than fame to Tantalus assign'd,  
 Would save thee from the tomb at last;  
 But thou must leave it all behind:

I give thee, therefore, counsel wise;  
 Confide not vainly in thy store,  
 However large—much less despise  
 Others comparatively poor.

But in thy more exalted state,  
 A just and equal temper show,  
 That all who see thee, rich and great,  
 May deem thee worthy to be so.

*On PALLAS Bathing.**From a Hymn of CALLIMACHUS.*

Nor oils of balmy scent produce,  
 Nor mirror for Minerva's use;  
 Ye nymphs who lave her! she, array'd  
 In genuine beauty, scorns their aid.  
 Not even when they left the skies,  
 To seek on Ida's head the prize,  
 From Paris' hand, did Juno deign,  
 Or Pallas in the chrystal plain  
 Of Simois' stream, her locks to trace,  
 Or in the mirror's polish'd face,  
 Though Venus oft with anxious care  
 Adjusted twice a single hair.

*To DEMOSTHENIS.*

It flatters and deceives thy view,  
 This mirror of ill-polish'd ore;  
 For were it just, and told thee true,  
 Thou would'st consult it never more.

*On a similar Character.*

You give your checks a rosy stain,  
 With washes dye your hair;  
 But paint and washes both are vain  
 To give a youthful air.

Those wrinkles mock your daily toil;  
 No labour will efface 'em;  
 You wear a mask of smoothest oil;  
 Yet still with ease we trace 'em.

An art so fruitless then forsake,  
 Which, though you much excel in,  
 You never can contrive to make,  
 Old Hecuba young Helen.

*On an ugly Fellow.*

Beware, my friend, of chrystal brook,  
 Or fountain, lest that hideous hook,  
 Thy nose, thou chance to see.  
 Narcissus' fate would then be thine,  
 And, self-detested, thou would'st pine  
 As self-enamour'd he.

*On a battered Beauty.*

Hair, wax, rouge, honey, teeth, you buy  
 A multifarious store:  
 A mask at once would all supply,  
 Nor would it cost you more.

*On a Thief.*

When Aulus, the nocturnal thief, made prize  
 Of Hermes, swift-winged envoy of the skies—  
 Hermes, Arcadia's king, the thief divine,  
 Who, when an infant, stole Apollo's kine,  
 And whom, as arbiter and overseer  
 Of our gymnastic sports, we planted here—  
 Hermes! he cried, you meet no new disaster;  
 Oftimes the pupil goes beyond his master.

*On Pedigree, from EPICHRMUS.*

My mother, if thou love me, name no more  
 My noble birth. Sounding at every breath  
 My noble birth, thou kill'st me. Thither fly,  
 As to their only refuge, all from whom  
 Nature withholds all good besides: *they* boast  
 Their noble birth, conduct us to the tombs  
 Of their forefathers, and from age to age  
 Ascending, trumpet their illustrious race.  
 But whom hast thou beheld, or can'st thou name,  
 Deriv'd from no forefathers? Such a man  
 Lives not; for how could such be born at all?  
 And if it chance, that, native of a land  
 Far distant, or in infancy depriv'd  
 Of all his kindred, one who *cannot* trace  
 His origin, exist, why deem him sprung  
 From baser ancestry than theirs who *can*?  
 My mother, he whom nature at his birth  
 Endow'd with virtuous qualities, although  
 An Æthiop and a slave, is nobly born.

*On Envy.*

Pity, says the Theban bard,  
 From my wishes I discard  
 Envy: let me rather be,  
 Rather far a theme for thee.  
 Pity to distress is shown;  
 Envy to the great alone.



So the Theban—But to shine  
 Less conspicuous be mine!  
 I prefer the golden mean  
 Pomp and penury between.  
 For alarm and peril wait  
 Ever on the loftiest state,  
 And the lowest, to the end,  
 Obloquy and scorn attend.

---

*By PHILEMON.*

Oft we enhance our ills by discontent,  
 And give them bulk beyond what nature meant.  
 A parent, brother, friend deceas'd, to cry,  
 "He's dead indeed, but he was born to die;"  
 Such temperate grief is suited to the size  
 And burthen of the loss, is just and wise.  
 But to exclaim, "Ah! wherefore was I born,  
 "Thus to be left, for ever thus forlorn?"  
 Who thus laments his loss, invites distress,  
 And magnifies a woe that might be less,  
 Through dull despondence to his lot resigned,  
 And leaving reason's remedy behind.

---

*By MOSCHUS.*

I slept, when Venus enter'd: To my bed  
 A Cupid in her beauteous hand she led,  
 A bashful-seeming boy, and thus she said:  
 "Shepherd receive my little one: I bring  
 "An untaught love, whom thou must teach to sing."  
 She said, and left him. I suspecting nought,  
 Many a sweet strain my subtle pupil taught,  
 How reed to reed Pan first with ozier bound,  
 How Pallas form'd the pipe of softest sound,  
 How Hermes gave the lute, and how the quire  
 Of Phœbus owe to Phœbus' self the lyre.  
 Such were my themes: my themes nought heeded he,  
 But ditties sang of am'rous sort to me,  
 The pangs that mortals and immortals prove  
 From Venus' influence and the darts of love.  
 Thus was the teacher by the pupil taught;  
 His lessons I retain'd, and mine forgot.

APPENDIX.

(No. 3.)

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TRANSLATIONS from HORACE and VIRGIL.

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THE  
FIFTH SATIRE  
OF THE  
FIRST BOOK OF HORACE.

(Printed in Duncombe's Horace.)

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*A humorous Description of the Author's Journey from Rome  
to Brundusium.*

'T WAS a long journey lay before us,  
When I, and honest Heliodorus,  
Who far in point of rhetoric  
Surpasses ev'ry living Greek,  
Each leaving our respective home,  
Together sally'd forth from Rome.

First at Aricia we alight,  
And there refresh, and pass the night,  
Our entertainment rather coarse  
Than sumptuous, but I've met with worse;  
Thence o'er the causeway, soft and fair,  
To Apiiforum we repair.  
But as this road is well supply'd  
(Temptation strong) on either side  
With inns commodious, snug and warm,  
We split the journey, and perform  
In two days time, what's often done  
By brisker travellers in one.  
Here, rather choosing not to sup  
Than with bad water mix my cup,

After a warm debate, in spite  
 Of a provoking appetite,  
 I sturdily resolv'd at last  
 To balk it, and pronounce a fast,  
 And in a moody humour wait,  
 While my less dainty comrades bait.

Now o'er the spangled hemisphere  
 Diffus'd, the starry train appear,  
 When there arose a desp'rate brawl,  
 The slaves and bargemen, one and all,  
 Rending their throats, (have mercy on us !)  
 As if they were resolv'd to stun us ;  
 " Steer the barge this way to the shore !  
 " I tell you, we'll admit no more !  
 " Plague ! will you never be content ?"  
 Thus a whole hour at least is spent,  
 While they receive the sev'ral fares,  
 And kick the mule into his gears.  
 Happy, these difficulties past,  
 Could we have fall'n asleep at last !  
 But, what with humming, croaking, biting,  
 Gnats, frogs, and all their plagues uniting,  
 These tuneful natives of the lake  
 Conspir'd so keep us broad awake.  
 Besides, to make the concert full,  
 Two maudlin wights, exceeding dull,  
 The bargeman, and a passenger,  
 Each in his turn essay'd an air  
 In honour of his absent fair.  
 At length, the passenger, oppress  
 With wine, left off, and snor'd the rest.  
 The weary bargeman too gave o'er,  
 And hearing his companion snore,  
 Seiz'd the occasion, fix'd the barge,  
 Turn'd out his mule to graze at large,  
 And slept, forgetful of his charge.  
 And now the sun o'er eastern hill  
 Discover'd that our barge stood still ;  
 When one, whose anger vex'd him sore,  
 With malice fraught, leaps quick on shore,  
 Plucks up a stake, with many a thwack  
 Assails the mule and driver's back.

Then slowly moving on with pain,  
 At ten Feronia's stream we gain,  
 And in her pure and glassy wave  
 Our hands and faces gladly lave.  
 Climbing three miles, fair Anxur's height  
 We reach, with stony quarries white.  
 While here, as was agreed, we wait  
 'Till, charg'd with bus'ness of the state,  
 Mæcenas and Cocceius come,  
 The messengers of peace from Rome.  
 My eyes, by wat'ry humours bear  
 And sore, I with black balsam smear.  
 At length they join us, and with them  
 Our worthy friend, Fonteius came,  
 A man of such complete desert,  
 Antony lov'd him at his heart.  
 At Fundi we refus'd to bait,  
 And laugh'd at vain Aufidius' state.  
 A prætor now, a scribe before,  
 The purple-border'd robe he wore,  
 His slave the smoking censer bore,  
 Fir'd at Muræna's we repose,  
 At Formia sup at Capito's.

With smiles the rising morn we greet,  
 At Sinnuessa pleas'd to meet  
 With Plotius, Varius, and the bard  
 Whom Mantua first with wonder heard.  
 The world no purer spirits knows,  
 For none my heart more warmly glows.  
 Oh! what embraces we bestow'd,  
 And with what joy our breasts o'erflow'd!  
 Sure, while my sense is sound and clear,  
 Long as I live, I shall prefer  
 A gay, good-natur'd, easy friend,  
 To ev'ry blessing Heav'n can send.  
 At a small village the next night  
 Near the Vulturnus we alight;  
 Where, as employ'd on state affairs,  
 We were supply'd by the purvey'rs,  
 Frankly at once, and without hire,  
 With food for man and horse, and fire.  
 Capua next day betimes we reach,  
 Where Virgil and myself, who each

Labour'd with different maladies,  
 His such a stomach, mine such eyes,  
 As would not bear strong exercise,  
 In drowsy mood to sleep resort ;  
 Mæcenas to the tennis-court.  
 Next at Cocceius' farm we're treated,  
 Above the Caudian tavern seated.  
 His kind and hospitable board  
 With choice of wholesome food was stor'd.

Now, O ye Nine, inspire my lays !  
 To nobler themes my fancy raise !  
 Two combatants, who scorn to yield  
 The noisy tongue-disputed field,  
 Sarmentus and Cicirrus, claim  
 A poet's tribute to their fame ;  
 Cicirrus of true Oscian breed,  
 Sarmentus, who was never freed,  
 But ran away. We don't defame him.  
 His lady lives, and still may claim him.  
 Thus dignify'd, in hardy fray  
 These champions their keen wit display,  
 And first Sarmentus led the way.  
 " Thy locks," quoth he, " so rough and coarse,  
 " Look like the mane of some wild horse."  
 We laugh. Cicirrus undismay'd—  
 " Have at you !"—cries, and shakes his head.  
 " 'Tis well," Sarmentus says, " you've lost  
 " That horn your forehead once could boast ;  
 " Since, maim'd and mangled as you are,  
 " You seem to butt." A hideous scar  
 Improv'd, 'tis true, with double grace,  
 The native horrors of his face.  
 Well, after much jocosely said  
 Of his grim front, so fiery red,  
 (For carbuncles had blotch'd it o'er,  
 As usual on Campania's shore)  
 " Give us," he cry'd, " since you're so big,  
 " A sample of the Cyclops' jig.  
 " Your shanks methinks no buskins ask,  
 " Nor does your phiz require a mask."  
 To this Cicirrus—" In return,  
 " Of you, Sir, now I fain would learn,



" When 'twas, no longer deem'd a slave,  
 " Your chains you to the Lares gave :  
 " For though a scriv'ner's right you claim,  
 " Your lady's title is the same.  
 " But what could make you run away,  
 " Since, pygmy as you are, each day  
 " A single pound of bread would quite  
 " O'erpow'r your puny appetite?"  
 Thus jok'd the champions, while we laugh'd,  
 And many a cheerful bumper quaff'd.

To Beneventum next we steer ;  
 Where our good host, by over-care  
 In roasting thrushes lean as mice,  
 Had almost fall'n a sacrifice.  
 The kitchen soon was all on fire,  
 And to the roof the flames aspire.  
 There might you see each man and master  
 Striving amidst this sad disaster  
 To save the supper. Then they came  
 With speed enough to quench the flame.  
 From hence we first at distance see  
 Th' Apulian hills, well known to me,  
 Parch'd by the sultry western blast ;  
 And which we never should have past,  
 Had not Trivicus by the way  
 Receiv'd us at the close of day.  
 But each was forc'd at ent'ring here  
 To pay the tribute of a tear ;  
 For more of smoke than fire was seen—  
 The hearth was pil'd with logs so green.  
 From hence in chaises we were carry'd  
 Miles twenty-four, and gladly tarry'd  
 At a small town, whose name my verse  
 (So barb'rous is it) can't rehearse.  
 Know it you may, by many a sign,  
 Water is dearer far than wine ;  
 Their bread is deem'd such dainty fare,  
 That ev'ry prudent traveller  
 His wallet loads with many a crust,  
 For at Canusium you might just  
 As well attempt to gnaw a stone  
 As think to get a morsel down.

That too with scanty streams is fed,  
 Its founder was brave Diomed.  
 Good Varius, (ah, that friends must part!)  
 Here left us all with aching heart.  
 At Rubi we arriv'd that day,  
 Well jaded by the length of way,  
 And sure poor mortals ne'er were wetter.  
 Next day no weather could be better,  
 No roads so bad; we scarce could crawl  
 Along to fishy Barium's wall.  
 Th' Egnatians next, who, by the rules  
 Of common sense, are knaves or fools,  
 Made all our sides with laughter heave,  
 Since we with them must needs believe,  
 That incense in their temples burns,  
 And without fire to ashes turns.  
 To circumcision's bigots tell  
 Such tales! For me, I know full well,  
 That in high heav'n, unmov'd by care,  
 The gods eternal quiet share:  
 Nor can I deem their spleen the cause,  
 Why fickle Nature breaks her laws.  
 Brundusium last we reach: and there  
 Stop short the Muse and traveller.

—◆—

THE  
 NINTH SATIRE  
 OF THE  
*FIRST BOOK OF HORACE.*

—◆—

*The Description of an Impertinent.*

Adapted to the present Times, 1759.

SAUNT'RING along the street one day,  
 On trifles musing by the way—  
 Up steps a free familiar wight,  
 (I scarcely knew the man by sight.)  
 "Carlos," he cry'd, "your hand, my dear!  
 "Gad, I rejoice to meet you here!

“ Pray heav’n I see you well ! ” — “ So, so :

“ E’en well enough, as times now go.

“ The same good wishes, Sir, to you.”

Finding he still pursu’d me close—

“ Sir, you have bus’ness I suppose.”

“ My bus’ness, Sir, is quickly done.

“ ’Tis but to make my merit known.

“ Sir, I have read ” — “ O learned Sir,

“ You and your learning I revere.”

Then, sweating with anxiety,

And sadly longing to get free,

Gods, how I scamper’d, scuffled for’t,

Ran, halted, ran again, stopp’d short,

Beckon’d my boy, and pull’d him near,

And whisper’d nothing in his ear.

Teaz’d with his loose unjointed chat—

“ What street is this? What house is that? ” —

O Harlow, how I envy’d thee

Thy unabash’d effrontery,

Who dar’st a foe with freedom blame,

And call a coxcomb by his name !

When I return’d him answer none,

Obligingly the fool ran on :

“ I see you’re dismally distrest,

“ Would give the world to be releas’d.

“ But by your leave, Sir, I shall still

“ Stick to your shirts, do what you will.

“ Pray, which way does your journey tend? ”

“ Oh ’tis a tedious way, my friend,

“ Across the Thames, the Lord knows where.

“ I would not trouble you so far.”

“ Well, I’m at leisure to attend you.”

“ Are you? ” thought I, “ the de’il befriend you.”

No ass, with double panniers rack’d,

Oppress’d, o’erladen, broken-back’d,

E’er look’d a thousandth part so dull

As I, nor half so like a fool.

“ Sir, I know little of myself,

(Proceeds the pert conceited elf)

“ If Gray or Mason you will deem

“ Than me more worthy your esteem.

“ Poems I write by folios,

“ As fast as other men write prose.

" Then I can sing so loud, so clear,  
 " That bard cannot with me compare.  
 " In dancing too I all surpass,  
 " Not Cooke can move with such a grace,"  
 Here I made shift, with much ado,  
 To interpose a word or two.  
 " Have you no parents, Sir, no friends,  
 " Whose welfare on your own depends?"—  
 " Parents, relations, say you? No,  
 " They're all dispos'd of long ago—  
 " Happy to be no more perplex'd.  
 " My fate too threatens, I go next.  
 " Dispatch me, Sir, 'tis now too late,  
 " Alas! to struggle with my fate!  
 " Well, I'm convinc'd my time is come—  
 " When young, a gypsy told my doom.  
 " The beldame shook her palsy'd head,  
 " As she perus'd my palm, and said:  
 " Of poison, pestilence, or war,  
 " Gout, stone, defluction, or catarrh,  
 " You have no reason to beware.  
 " Beware the coxcomb's idle prate;  
 " Chiefly, my son, beware of that.  
 " Be sure, when you behold him, fly  
 " Out of all ear-shot, or you die."

To Rufus' Hall we now drew near,  
 Where he was summon'd to appear,  
 Refute the charge the plaintiff brought,  
 Or suffer judgment by default.  
 " For Heaven's sake, if you love me, wait  
 " One moment! I'll be with you straight."  
 Glad of a plausible pretence—  
 " Sir, I must beg you to dispense  
 " With my attendance in the court,  
 " My legs will surely suffer for't."—  
 " Nay, prythee, Carlos, stop awhile!"  
 " Faith, Sir, in law I have no skill;  
 " Besides, I have no time to spare.  
 " I must be going, you know where."  
 " Well, I protest, I'm doubtful now,  
 " Whether to leave my suit or you."  
 " Me without scruple! (I reply)  
 " Me by all means, Sir,"—" No, not I.

" *Allons, Monsieur!*" 'Twere vain, you know,  
 To strive with a victorious foe ;  
 So I reluctantly obey,  
 And follow, where he leads the way.

" You, and Newcastle, are so close,  
 " Still hand and glove, Sir, I suppose.—  
 " Newcastle (let me tell you, Sir)  
 " Has not his equal every where."—  
 " Well ; there, indeed, your fortune's made.  
 " Faith, Sir, you understand your trade.  
 " Would you but give me your good word,  
 " Just introduce me to my Lord,  
 " I should serve charmingly by way  
 " Of second fiddle, as they say :  
 " What think you, Sir ? 'twere a good jest,  
 " 'Slife, we should quickly scout the rest."—  
 " Sir, you mistake the matter far,  
 " We have no second fiddles there."—  
 " Richer than I some folks may be,  
 " More learned. But it hurts not me.  
 " Friends though he has of diff'rent kind,  
 " Each has his proper place assign'd."  
 " Strange matters these allerdg'd by you !"—  
 " Strange they may be. But they are true."  
 " Well, then, I vow 'tis mighty clever ;  
 " Now, I long ten times more than ever  
 " To be advanc'd extremely near  
 " One of his shining character.  
 " Have but the will ; there wants no more,  
 " 'Tis plain enough you have the pow'r.  
 " His easy temper (that's the worst)  
 " He knows, and is so shy at first.  
 " But such a cavalier as you—  
 " Lord, Sir, you'll quickly bring him too !  
 " Well ; if I fail in my design,  
 " Sir, it shall be no fault of mine.  
 " If by the saucy servile tribe  
 " Deny'd, what think you of a bribe ?  
 " Shut out to-day, not die with sorrow,  
 " But try my luck again to-morrow.  
 " Never attempt to visit him  
 " But at the most convenient time ;



" Attend him on each levee-day,  
 " And there my humble duty pay.  
 " Labour like this our want supplies,  
 " And they must stoop who mean to rise."

While thus he wittingly harangu'd,  
 For which you'll guess I wish him hang'd,  
 Campley, a friend of mine, came by,  
 Who knew his humour more than I.  
 We stop, salute, and—" Why so fast,  
 " Friend Carlos?—Whither all this haste?"—  
 Fir'd at the thoughts of a reprieve,  
 I pinch him, pull him, twitch his sleeve,  
 Nod, beckon, bite my lips, wink, pout,  
 Do ev'ry thing but speak plain out ;  
 While he, sad dog, from the beginning  
 Determin'd to mistake my meaning,  
 Instead of pitying my curse,  
 By jeering made it ten times worse.  
 " Campley, what secret, pray, was that  
 " You wanted to communicate?"  
 " I recollect. But 'tis no matter.  
 " Carlos, we'll talk of that hereafter.  
 " E'en let the secret rest. 'Twill tell  
 " Another time, Sir, just as well."

Was ever such a dismal day !  
 Unlucky cur, he steals away,  
 And leaves me, half bereft of life,  
 At mercy of the butcher's knife :  
 When sudden, shouting from afar,  
 See his antagonist appear !  
 The bailiff seiz'd him quick as thought.  
 " Ho, Mr. Scoundrel ! are you caught ?  
 " Sir, you are witness to th' arrest."  
 " Aye marry, Sir, I'll do my best."  
 The mob huzzas. Away they trudge,  
 Culprit and all, before the judge.  
 Meanwhile I luckily enough,  
 Thanks to Apollo, got clear off.

*THE SALLAD.*

By VIRGIL.

*This singular poem, which the learned and judicious Heyne seems inclined to think a translation of Virgil's, from the Greek of Parthenius, was translated into English, by Cowper, during his depressive malady, June, 1799; and to those who are used to philosophize on the powers of the human mind under affliction, it will appear a highly interesting curiosity.*

*I find, in the second volume of the St. James's Magazine, published in 1763, by Lloyd, the early friend of Cowper, another version of this poem in rhyme—it has only the initials of the author prefixed—R. T.*

THE winter-night now well-nigh worn away,  
 The wakeful cock proclaim'd approaching day,  
 When Simulus, poor tenant of a farm  
 Of narrowest limits, heard the shrill alarm,  
 Yawn'd, stretch'd his limbs, and anxious to provide  
 Against the pangs of hunger unsupplied,  
 By slow degrees his tatter'd bed forsook,  
 And, poking in the dark, explor'd the nook  
 Where embers slept with ashes heap'd around,  
 And with burnt fingers-ends the treasure found.

It chanc'd that from a brand beneath his nose,  
 Sure proof of latent fire, some smoke arose;  
 When trimming with a pin th' incrust'd tow,  
 And stooping it toward the coals below,  
 He toils, with cheeks distended, to excite  
 The ling'ring flame, and gains at length a light.  
 With prudent heed he spreads his hand before  
 The quiv'ring lamp, and opes his gran'ry door.  
 Small was his stock, but taking for the day  
 A measur'd stint of twice eight pounds away.  
 With these his mill he seeks. A shelf at hand,  
 Fixt in the wall, affords his lamp a stand:  
 Then baring both his arms—a sleeveless coat  
 He girds, the rough exuviae of a goat;

And with a rubber, for that use design'd,  
 Cleansing his mill within, begins to grind ;  
 Each hand has its employ ; lab'ring amain,  
 This turns the wince, while that supplies the grain.  
 The stone revolving rapidly, now glows,  
 And the bruis'd corn, a mealy current flows ;  
 While he, to make his heavy labour light,  
 Tasks oft his left-hand to relieve his right ;  
 And chaunts with rudest accent, to beguile  
 His ceaseless toil, as rude a strain the while.  
 And now, dame Cybale, come forth ! he cries ;  
 But Cybale, still slumb'ring, nought replies.

From Afric she, the swain's sole serving-maid,  
 Whose face and form alike her birth betray'd.  
 With woolly locks, lips tumid, sable skin,  
 Wide bosom, udders flaccid, belly thin,  
 Legs siender, broad and most mishapen feet,  
 Chapp'd into chinks, and parch'd with solar heat.  
 Such, summon'd oft, she came ; at his command  
 Fresh fuel heap'd, the sleeping embers fann'd,  
 And made, in haste, her simm'ring skillet steam,  
 Replenish'd newly from the neighbouring stream.

The labours of the mill perform'd, a sieve  
 The mingled flour and bran must next receive,  
 Which shaken oft, shoots Ceres through refin'd  
 And better dress'd, her husks all left behind.  
 This done, at once, his future plain repast,  
 Unleaven'd, on a shaven board he cast,  
 With tepid lymph first largely soak'd it all,  
 Then gather'd it with both hands to a ball,  
 And spreading it again with both hands wide,  
 With sprinkled salt the stiffen'd mass supplied ;  
 At length the stubborn substance, duly wrought,  
 Takes from his palms, impress'd, the shape it ought,  
 Becomes an orb—and, quarter'd into shares,  
 The faithful mark of just division bears.  
 Last, on his hearth it finds convenient space,  
 For Cybale before had swept the place,  
 And there, with tiles and embers overspread,  
 She leaves it, reeking in its sultry bed.

Nor Simulus, while Vulcan thus alone  
 His part perform'd, proves heedless of his own ;  
 But sedulous not merely to subdue  
 His hunger, but to please his palate too,  
 Prepares more sav'ry food. His chimney-side  
 Could boast no gammon, salted well, and dried,  
 And hook'd behind him ; but sufficient store  
 Of bundled annis, and a cheese it bore—  
 A broad round cheese, which, through its centre strung  
 With a tough broom-twig, in the corner hung ;  
 The prudent hero, therefore, with address  
 And quick dispatch, now seeks another mess.

Close to his cottage lay a garden-ground,  
 With reeds and osiers sparely girt around ;  
 Small was the spot, but lib'ral to produce,  
 Nor wanted aught that serves a peasant's use ;  
 And sometimes e'en the rich would borrow thence,  
 Although its tillage was his sole expense.  
 For oft, as from his toils abroad he ceas'd,  
 Home-bound by weather, or some stated feast,  
 His debt of culture here he duly paid,  
 And only left the plough to wield the spade.  
 He knew to give each plant the soil it needs,  
 To drill the ground, and cover close the seeds ;  
 And could with ease compel the wanton rill  
 To turn, and wind, obedient to his will.  
 There flourish'd star-wort, and the branching beet,  
 The sorrel acid, and the mallow sweet,  
 The skirret, and the leak's aspiring kind,  
 The noxious poppy—quencher of the mind !  
 Salubrious sequel of a sumptuous board,  
 The lettuce, and the long huge bellied gourd ;  
 But these (for none his appetite controul'd  
 With stricter sway) the thrifty rustic sold ;  
 With broom-twigs neatly bound, each kind apart,  
 He bore them ever to the public mart ;  
 Whence, laden still, but with a lighter load  
 Of cash well-earn'd, he took his homeward road,  
 Expending seldom, ere he quitted Rome,  
 His gains, in flesh-meat for a feast at home.  
 There, at no cost, on onions rank and red,  
 Or the curl'd endive's bitter leaf, he fed :

On scallions slic'd, or, with a sensual gust,  
 On rockets—foul provocatives of lust!  
 Nor even shunn'd, with smarting gums, to press  
 Nasturtium—pungent, face-distorting mess!

Some such regale now also in his thought,  
 With hasty steps his garden-ground he sought:  
 There delving with his hands, he first displac'd  
 Four plants of garlick, large, and rooted fast;  
 The tender tops of parsley next he culls,  
 Then the old rue-bush shudders as he pulls,  
 And coriander last to these succeeds,  
 That hangs on slightest threads her trembling seeds,

Plac'd near his sprightly fire, he now demands  
 The mortar at his sable servant's hands;  
 When, stripping all his garlick first, he tore  
 Th' exterior coats, and cast them on the floor,  
 Then cast away, with like contempt, the skin,  
 Flimsier concealment of the cloves within.  
 These search'd, and perfect found, he one by one  
 Rinc'd, and dispos'd within the hollow stone.  
 Salt added, and a lump of salted cheese,  
 With his injected herbs he cover'd these,  
 And tucking with his left his tunic tight,  
 And seizing fast the pestle with his right,  
 The garlick bruising first he soon express'd,  
 And mix'd the various juices of the rest.  
 He grinds, and by degrees his herbs below,  
 Lost in each other, their own pow'rs forego,  
 And with the cheese in compound, to the sight  
 Nor wholly green appear, nor wholly white.  
 His nostrils oft the forceful fume resent,  
 He curs'd full oft his dinner for its scent,  
 Or with wry faces, wiping, as he spoke,  
 The trickling tears, cried, "Vengeance on the smoke!"  
 The work proceeds: not roughly turns he now  
 The pestle, but in circles smooth and slow.  
 With cautious hand, that grudges what it spills,  
 Some drops of olive-oil he next instills;  
 Then vinegar, with caution scarcely less;  
 And gath'ring to a ball the medley-mess,  
 Last, with two fingers frugally applied,  
 Sweeps the small remnant from the mortar's side,



And thus complete in figure and in kind,  
Obtains at length the sallad he design'd.

And now black Cybale before him stands,  
The cake drawn newly glowing in her hands;  
He glad receives it, chasing far away  
All fears of famine, for the passing day:  
His legs enclos'd in buskins, and his head  
In its tough casque of leather, forth he led  
And yok'd his steers, a dull obedient pair,  
Then drove a-field, and plung'd the pointed share.



## A P P E N D I X.

(No. 4.)

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*Translations from various Latin Poems of Vincent Bourne,  
and a few Epigrams of Owen.*

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### *The Thracian.*

THRACIAN parents, at his birth,  
Mourn their babe with many a tear,  
But with undissembled mirth,  
Place him breathless on his bier.

Greece and Rome, with equal scorn;  
“Oh the savages!” exclaim,  
Whether they rejoice or mourn,  
Well-entitled to the name!

But the cause of this concern  
And this pleasure, would they trace,  
Even they might somewhat learn  
From the savages of Thrace.

---

### THRAX.

Threicium infantem, cum lucem intravit et auras,  
Fletibus exceptit mæstus uterque parens.  
Threicium infantem, cum luce exivit et auris  
Extulit ad funus lætus uterque parens.  
Interea tu Roma; et tu tibi Græcia plaudens,  
Dicitis, hæc vera est Thraica barbaries.  
Lætitiæ causam, causamque exquirite luctus;  
Vosque est quod doceat Thraica barbaries.

*Reciprocal Kindness, the primary Law of Nature.*

Androcles, from his injur'd Lord, in dread  
 Of instant death, to Lybia's desert fled;  
 Tir'd with his toilsome flight, and parch'd with heat,  
 He spied, at length, a cavern's cool retreat.  
 But scarce had given to rest his weary frame,  
 When, hugest of its kind, a lion came:  
 He roar'd approaching; but the savage din  
 To plaintive murmurs chang'd, arriv'd within,  
 And with expressive looks his lifted paw  
 Presenting, aid implor'd from whom he saw.  
 The fugitive, through terror at a stand,  
 Dar'd not awhile afford his trembling hand,  
 But bolder grown at length, inherent found  
 A pointed thorn, and drew it from the wound.  
 The cure was wrought; he wip'd the sanious flood,  
 And firm and free from pain the lion stood.  
 Again he seeks the wilds, and day by day  
 Regales his inmate with the parted prey.  
 Nor he disdains the dole, though unprepar'd,  
 Spread on the ground, and with a lion shar'd.  
 But thus to live—still lost, sequester'd still—  
 Scarce seem'd his lord's revenge an heavier ill.

*Mutua Benevolentia primaria Lex Naturæ est.*

Per Libyæ Androcles siccas errabat arenas,  
 Qui vagus iratum fugerat exul herum.  
 Lassato tandem fractoque labore viarum,  
 Ad scopuli patuit cœca caverna latus.  
 Hanc subit; et placidæ dederat vix membra sopori  
 Cum subito immanis rugat ad antra leo:  
 Ille pedem attollens læsum, et miserabile murmur  
 Edens, qua poterat voce, precatur opem.  
 Perculsus novitate rei, incertusque timore,  
 Vix tandem tremulas admovet erro manus:  
 Et spinam explorans (nam fixa in vulnere spina  
 Hærebat) cauto molliter ungue trahit:  
 Continuo dolor omnis abit, teter fluit humor;  
 Et coit, absterso sanguine, rupta cutis:  
 Nunc iterum sylvas dumosque peragrat; et affert  
 Providus assiduas hospes ad antra dapes.

Home, native home!—Oh might he but repair!—  
 He must, he will, though death attends him there.  
 He goes, and doom'd to perish on the sands  
 Of the full theatre unpitied stands!  
 When, lo! the self-same lion from his cage  
 Flies to devour him, famish'd into rage.  
 He flies, but viewing in his purposed prey  
 The man, his healer, pauses on his way,  
 And, soften'd by remembrance into sweet  
 And kind composure, crouches at his feet.

Mute with astonishment th' assembly gaze;  
 But why, ye Romans? Whence your mute amaze?  
 All this is nat'ral—Nature bade him rend  
 An enemy; she bids him spare a friend.

—♦—

*A Manual more ancient than the Art of Printing, and not to be  
 found in any Catalogue.*

There is a book, which we may call  
 (Its excellence is such)  
 Alone a library, though small;  
 The ladies thumb it much.

---

Juxta epulis accumbit homo conviva leonis,  
 Nec crudos dubitat participare cibos.  
 Quis tamen ista ferat desertæ tædia vitæ?  
 Vix furor ultoris tristior esset heri  
 Devotum certis caput objectare periclis  
 Et patrios statuit rursus adire lares.  
 Traditur hic, feri facturus spectacula plebi,  
 Accipit et miserum tristis arena reum.  
 Irruit e caveis fors idem impastus et acer,  
 Et medicum attonito suspicit ore leo.  
 Suspicit, et veterem agnoscens vetus hospes amicum  
 Decumbit notos blandulus ante pedes.  
 Quid vero percussi animis, stupuere quirites?  
 Ecquid prodigii, territa Roma, vides?  
 Unius naturæ opus est; ea sola furem  
 Sumere quæ jussit, ponere sola jubet.

—♦—

*Manuale Typographia omni antiquius nulli uspiam Librorum insertum  
 Catalogo.*

Exiguus liber est, muliebri creber in usu,  
 Per se qui dici bibliotheca potest.

Words none, things num'rous it contains ;  
 And, things with words compar'd,  
 Who needs be told, that has his brains,  
 Which merits most regard ?

Oftimes its leaves of scarlet hue  
 A golden edging boast ;  
 And open'd, it displays to view  
 Twelve pages at the most,

Nor name, nor title, stamp'd behind  
 Adorns its outer part ;  
 But all within 'tis richly lin'd,  
 A magazine of art.

The whitest hands that secret hoard  
 Oft visit ; and the fair  
 Preserve it in their bosoms stor'd,  
 As with a miser's care.

Thence implements of ev'ry size,  
 And form'd for various use,  
 (They need but to consult their eyes)  
 They readily produce.

The largest and the longest kind  
 Possess the foremost page,  
 A sort most needed by the blind,  
 Or nearly such from age.

Copia verborum non est, sed copia rerum ;  
 Copia (quod nemo deneget) utilior.  
 Rubris consuitur pannis ; fors textitur auro ;  
 Bis sexta ad summum pagina claudit opus.  
 Nil habet a tergo titulive aut nominis ; intus  
 Thesaurus artis servat, et intus opes :  
 Intus opes, quæ nympha sinu pulcherrima gestet,  
 Quas nive candidior tractet ametque manus.  
 Quando instrumentum præsens sibi postulat usus,  
 Majusve, aut operis, pro ratione, minus.  
 Et genere et modulo diversa habet arma, gradatim  
 Digesta, ad numeros attenuata suos.



The full-charg'd leaf, which next ensues,  
 Presents in bright array  
 The smaller sort, which matrons use,  
 Not quite so blind as they.

The third, the fourth, the fifth supply  
 What their occasions ask,  
 Who with a more discerning eye  
 Perform a nicer task.

But still with regular decrease,  
 From size to size they fall,  
 In ev'ry leaf grow less and less ;  
 The last are least of all.

Oh ! what a fund of genius, pent  
 In narrow space, is here ?  
 This volume's method and intent,  
 How luminous and clear !

It leaves no reader at a loss  
 Or pos'd, whoever reads ;  
 No commentator's tedious gloss,  
 Nor even index needs.

Search Bodley's many thousands o'er !  
 No book is treasur'd there,  
 Nor yet in Granta's num'rous store,  
 That may with this compare.

Primum enchiridii folium majuscula profert,  
 Qualia quæ bloeso est lumine poscat anus  
 Quod sequitur folium, matronis arma ministrat,  
 Dicere quæ magnis proximiora licet.  
 Tertium, item quartum, quintumque minuscula supplet,  
 Sed non ejusdem singula quoque loci.  
 Disposita ordinibus certis, discrimina servant ;  
 Quæ sibi convenient, seligat unde nurus.  
 Ultima quæ restant quæ multa minutula nympha  
 Dicit, sunt sexti divitæ folii.  
 Quantillo in spatio doctrina O ! quanta latescit !  
 Quam tamen obscuram vix brevitate voces.  
 Non est interpres, non est commentarius ullus,  
 Aut index ; tam sunt omnia perspicua.

No !—Rival none in either host  
 Of this was ever seen,  
 Or that contents could justly boast  
 So brilliant and so keen.

—••—  
*An Ænigma.*

A needle small, as small can be,  
 In bulk and use surpasses me,  
 Nor is my purchase dear ;  
 For little, and almost for nought,  
 As many of my kind are bought  
 As days are in the year.

Yet though but little use we boast,  
 And are procured at little cost,  
 The labour is not light,  
 Nor few artificers it asks,  
 All skilful in their sev'ral tasks,  
 To fashion us aright.

One fuses metal o'er the fire,  
 A second draws it into wire,  
 The shears another plies,  
 Who clips in lengths the brazen thread  
 For him, who, chafing every shred,  
 Gives all an equal size.

---

Ætatem ad quamvis, ad captum ita fingitur omnem,  
 Ut nihil auxilii postulet inde liber.  
 Millia librorum numerat perplura; nec ullum  
 Bodlæi huic jactat bibliotheca parem.  
 Millia Cæsareo numerat quoque munere Granta,  
 Hæc tamen est inter millia tale nihil.  
 Non est, non istis author de millibus unus,  
 Cui tanta ingenii vis, vel acumen inest.

—••—  
 ÆNIGMA.

Parvula res, et acu minor est, et ineptior usu:  
 Quotque dies annus, tot tibi drachma dabit.  
 Sed licet exigui pretii minimique valoris,  
 Ecce, quot artificum postulat illa manus!  
 Unius in primis cura est conflare metallum;  
 In longa alterius ducere fila labor.

A fifth prepares, exact and round,  
 The knob, with which it must be crown'd ;  
     His follow'r makes it fast ;  
 And with his mallet and his file  
 To shape the point, employs a while  
     The seventh, and the last.

Now, therefore, Œdipus ! declare  
 What creature, wonderful, and rare,  
     A process, that obtains  
 Its purpose with so much ado,  
 At last produces !—Tell me true,  
     And take me for your pains !



*Sparrows self-domesticated in Trinity College, Cambridge.*

None ever shar'd the social feast,  
 Or as an inmate, or a guest,  
 Beneath the celebrated dome  
 Where once Sir Isaac had his home,  
 Who saw not, (and with some delight  
 Perhaps he view'd the novel sight)  
 How num'rous, at the tables there,  
 The sparrows beg their daily fare.  
 For there, in every nook and cell,  
 Where such a family may dwell,

---

Tertius in partes resecat, quartusque resectum  
 Perpolit ad modulos attenuatque datos.  
 Est quinti tornare caput, quod sextus adaptet ;  
     Septimus in punctum cudit et exacuit.  
 His tandem auxiliis ita res procedit, ut omnes  
 Ad numeros ingens perficiatur opus.  
 Quæ tanti ingenii quæ tanti est summa laboris ?  
     Si mihi respondes Œdipe, tota tua est.



*Passeres indigenæ Col. Trin. Cant. Commensales.*

Incola qui norit sedes, aut viserit hospes,  
 Newtoni egregii quas celebravit honos ;  
 Viditque et meminit, loetus fortasse videndo,  
     Quam multa ad mensas advolitarit avis.  
 Ille nec ignorat, nidos ut, vere ineunte,  
     Tecta per et forulos et tabulata struat.

Sure as the vernal season comes  
 Their nests they weave in hope of crumbs,  
 Which kindly given, may serve with food  
 Convenient their unfeather'd brood ;  
 And oft as with its summons clear  
 The warning bell salutes their ear,  
 Sagacious list'ners to the sound,  
 They flock from all the fields around,  
 To reach the hospitable hall,  
 None more attentive to the call.  
 Arriv'd, the pensionary band,  
 Hopping and chirping, close at hand,  
 Solicit what they soon receive,  
 The sprinkled, plenteous donative.  
 Thus is a multitude, though large,  
 Supported at a trivial charge ;  
 A single doit would overpay  
 Th' expenditure of every day,  
 And who can grudge so small a grace  
 To suppliants, natives of the place ?

—

*Familiarity Dangerous.*

As in her ancient mistress' lap,  
 The youthful tabby lay,  
 They gave each other many a tap,  
 Alike dispos'd to play.

---

Ut coram educat teneros ad pabula foetus,  
 Et'pascat micis, quas det amica manus.  
 Convivas quoties campanæ ad prandia pulsus  
 Convocat, haud epulis certior hospes adest.  
 Continuo jucuada simul vox fertur ad aures,  
 Vicinos passer quisque relinquit agros  
 Hospitium ad notum properatur; et ordine stantes  
 Expectant panis fragmina quisque sua.  
 Hos tamen, hos omnes, vix uno largior asse  
 Sumptus per totam pascit alitque diem.  
 Hunc unum, hunc modicum (nec quisquam inviderit assem)  
 Indigenæ hospitii jure, merentur aves.

—

*Nulli te facias nimis soledem.*

Palpat heram felis, gremio recubans in anili;  
 Quam semel atque iterum Lydia palpat hera.

But strife ensues. Puss waxes warm,  
 And with protruded claws  
 Ploughs all the length of Lydia's arm,  
 Mere wantonness the cause.

At once, resentful of the deed,  
 She shakes her to the ground  
 With many a threat, that she shall bleed  
 With still a deeper wound.

But Lydia, bid thy fury rest!  
 It was a venial stroke,  
 For she that will with kittens jest  
 Should bear a kitten's joke.

—

*Invitation to the Redbreast.*

Sweet bird, whom the winter constrains—  
 And seldom another it can—  
 To seek a retreat, while he reigns,  
 In the well-shelter'd dwellings of man,  
 Who never can'st seem to intrude,  
 Though in all places equally free,  
 Come, oft as the season is rude!  
 Thou art sure to be welcome to me,

At sight of the first feeble ray  
 That pierces the clouds of the east,  
 To inveigle thee every day  
 My window shall show thee a feast.

Ludum lis sequitur; nam totos exerit ungues,  
 Et longo lacerat vulnere felis anum.  
 Continuo exardens gremio muliercula felem  
 Nec gravibus multis excutit absque minis.  
 Quod tamen haud æquum est—si vult cum fele joculari,  
 Felinum debet Lydia ferre jocum.

—

*Ad Rubeculam Invitatio.*

Hospes avis, conviva domo gratissima cuivis,  
 Quam bruma humanam quærere cogit opem:  
 Huc O! hyberni fugias ut frigora coeli,  
 Confuge, et incolumis sub lare vive meo!



For, taught by experience, I know  
 Thee mindful of benefit long;  
 And that, thankful for all I bestow,  
 Thou wilt pay me with many a song.

Then, soon as the swell of the buds  
 Bespeaks the renewal of spring,  
 Fly hence, if thou wilt, to the woods,  
 Or where it shall please thee to sing:  
 And should'st thou, compell'd by a frost,  
 Come again to my window or door,  
 Doubt not an affectionate host!  
 Only pay, as thou payd'st me before.

Thus music must needs be confest  
 To flow from a fountain above,  
 Else how should it work in the breast  
 Unchangeable friendship and love?  
 And who on the globe can be found,  
 Save your generations and ours,  
 That can be delighted by sound,  
 Or boasts any musical pow'rs?

Unde tuam esuriem releves, alimenta fenestræ  
 Apponam, quoties itque reditque dies.  
 Usu etenim edidici, quod grato alimenta rependes  
 Cantu, quæ dederit cunque benigna manus.  
 Vere novo tepidæ spirant cum molliter auræ,  
 Et novus in quavis arbore vernat honos,  
 Pro libitu ad lucos redeas, sylvasque revisas,  
 Lætata quibus resonat musica, parque tuæ.  
 Sin iterum, sin forte iterum, inclementia brumæ  
 Ad mea dilectam tecta reducet avem  
 Esto, redux, grato memor esto rependere cantu  
 Pabula, quæ dederit cunque benigna manus.  
 Vis hinc harmoniæ, numerorum hinc sacra potestas  
 Conspicitur, nusquam conspicienda magis,  
 Vincula quod stabilis firmissima nectit amoris,  
 Vincula vix longa dissocianda die.  
 Captat, et incantat blando oblectamine musa  
 Humanum pariter pennigerumque genus;  
 Nos homines et aves, quotcunque animantia vivunt,  
 Nos soli harmoniæ genus studiosa sumus.

*Strada's Nightingale.*

The shepherd touch'd his reed ; sweet Philomel  
 Essay'd, and oft essay'd to catch the strain,  
 And treasuring, as on her ear they fell,  
 The numbers, echo'd note for note again.

The peevish youth, who ne'er had found before  
 A rival of his skill, indignant heard,  
 And soon (for various was his tuneful store)  
 In loftier tones defy'd the simple bird,

She dar'd the task, and rising as he rose,  
 With all the force that passion gives, inspir'd,  
 Return'd the sounds awhile, but in the close  
 Exhausted fell, and at his feet expir'd.

Thus strength, not skill prevail'd. O fatal strife!  
 By the poor songstress playfully begun ;  
 And O sad victory ! which cost thy life—  
 And he may wish that he had never won !

—♦—

*Ode on the Death of a Lady who lived one hundred Years, and  
 died on her Birth-day in 1728.*

Ancient dame, how wide and vast,  
 To a race like ours appears,  
 Rounded to an orb at last,  
 All thy multitude of years !

---

*Strade Philomela.*

Pastorem audivit calamis Philomela camentem,  
 Et voluit tenues ipsa referre modos ;  
 Ipsa retentavit numeros, didicitque retentans  
 Argutum fida reddere voce melos.  
 Pastor inassuetus rivalem ferre, misellam  
 Grandius ad carmen provocat, urget avem.  
 Tuque etiam in modulos surgis Philomela ; sed impar  
 Viribus heu impar, examinisque cadis.  
 Durum certamen ! tristis victoria ! cantum  
 Maluerit pastor non superasse tuum.

—♦—

ANUS SÆCULARIS

*Quæ justam centum annorum ætatem, ipso die natali, explevit, et clausit  
 anno 1728.*

Singularis prodigium O senectæ,  
 Et novum exemplum diuturnitatis,  
 Cujus annorum series in æmplum

desinit orbem !

We, the herd of human kind,  
 Frailer and of feebler pow'rs;  
 We, to narrow bounds confin'd,  
 Soon exhaust the sum of ours.

Death's delicious banquet—we  
 Perish even from the womb;  
 Swifter than a shadow flee,  
 Nourish'd, but to feed the tomb.

Seeds of merciless disease  
 Lurk in all that we enjoy;  
 Some that waste us by degrees,  
 Some that suddenly destroy.

And if life o'erleap the bourn  
 Common to the sons of men,  
 What remains, but that we mourn,  
 Dream, and doat, and drivel then?

Fast as moons can wax and wain  
 Sorrow comes; and while we groan,  
 Pant with anguish, and complain,  
 Half our years are fled and gone.

Vulgus infelix hominum, dies en!  
 Computo quam dispare computamus!  
 Quam tua a summa procul est remota

summula nostra.

Pabulum nos luxuriesque lethi,  
 Nos, simul nati, incipimus perire,  
 Nos statim a cunis cita destinamur

præda sepulchro.

Occulit mors insidias, ubi vix,  
 Vix opinari est, rapidæve febris  
 Vim repentinam, aut male pertinacis

semina morbi.

Sin brevem possit superare vita  
 Terminum, quicquid superest, vacivum,  
 Illud ignavis superest et imbe-

cillibus annis.

Detrahunt multum, minuuntque sorti  
 Morbidi questus gemitusque anhelii;  
 Ad parem crescunt numerum diesque

atque dolores.

If a few, (to few 'tis giv'n)  
 Ling'ring on this earthly stage,  
 Creep, and halt with steps unev'n,  
 To the period of an age:—

Wherefore live they but to see  
 Cunning, arrogance, and force?  
 Sights, lamented much by thee,  
 Holding their accustom'd course!

Oft' was seen, in ages past,  
 All that we with wonder view;  
 Often shall be to the last;  
 Earth produces nothing new.

Thee we gratulate; content,  
 Should propitious Heav'n design  
 Life for us, as calmly spent,  
 Though but half the length of thine.

—♦—

*The Cause won.*

Two neighbours furiously dispute;  
 A field—the subject of the suit.

Si quis hæc vitet (quotus ille quisque est!)

Et gradu pergendo laborioso

Ad tuum, fortasse tuum, moretur

reptilis oevum:

At videt, mæstum tibi sæpe visum, in-

Jurias, vim, furta, dolos, et inso-

Lentiam, quo semper eunt, eodem

ire tenore.

Nil inest rebus novitatis; et quod

Uspiam est nugarum et ineptiarum,

Unius volvi videt, et revolvi

circulus ævi.

Integram ætatam tibi gratulamur;

Et dari nobis satis æstimamus,

Si tuam, saltem vacuum querelis

dimidiemus.

—♦—

*Victoria Forensis.*

Caio cum Titio lis et vexatio longa

Sunt de vicini proprietate soli.

Trivial the spot, yet such the rage  
 With which the combatants engage,  
 'Twere hard to tell who covets most  
 The prize—at whatsoever cost.  
 The pleadings swell. Words still suffice.  
 No single word but has its price.  
 No term but yields some fair pretence,  
 For novel and increas'd expense.

Defendant thus becomes a name,  
 Which he that bore it may disclaim;  
 Since both, in one description blended,  
 Are plaintiffs—when the suit is ended.

—♦—

*The Silk-Worm.*

The beams of April, ere it goes,  
 A worm, scarce visible, disclose;  
 All winter long content to dwell  
 The tenant of his native shell.  
 The same prolific season gives  
 The sustenance by which he lives,  
 The mulb'ry-leaf, a simple store,  
 That serves him—till he needs no more!  
 For, his dimensions once complete,  
 Thenceforth none ever sees him eat;

---

Protinus ingentes animos in jurgia sumunt  
 Utraque vincendi pars studiosa nimis.  
 — Lis tumet in schedulas, et jam verbosior, et jam:  
 Nec verbum quodvis asse minoris emunt.  
 Præterunt menses, et terminus alter et alter;  
 Quisque novos sumptus alter et alter, habent.  
 Ille querens, hic respondens pendente vocatur  
 Lite; sed ad finem litis, uterque querens.

—♦—

BOMBYX.

Fine sub Aprilis Bombyx excluditur ovo,  
 Reptilis exiguo corpore vermiculus.  
 Frondibus hic mori, volvox dum fiat adultus,  
 Gnaviter incumbens, dum satiatur, edit.  
 Crescendo ad justum cum jam maturuit ævum,  
 Incipit artifici stamine textor opus:



Though, till his growing time be past,  
 Scarce ever is he seen to fast.  
 That hour arriv'd, his work begins;  
 He spins and weaves, and weaves and spins,  
 Till circle upon circle wound  
 Careless around him and around,  
 Conceals him with a veil, though slight,  
 Impervious to the keenest sight.  
 Thus self-enclos'd, as in a cask,  
 At length he finishes his task;  
 And, though a worm, when he was lost,  
 Or caterpillar at the most,  
 When next we see him, wings he wears,  
 And in papilio-pomp appears;  
 Becomes oviparous; supplies  
 With future worms and future flies  
 The next ensuing year;—and dies!

—♦—

*The Innocent Thief.*

Not a flow'r can be found in the fields,  
 Or the spot that we till for our pleasure,  
 From the largest to least, but it yields  
 The bee, never-weary'd, a treasure.

Scarce any she quits unexplor'd,  
 —With a diligence truly exact;  
 Yet, steal what she may for her hoard,  
 Leaves evidence—none of the fact.

Filaeque condensans filis, orbem implicat orbi  
 Et sensim in gyris conditus ipse latet.  
 Inque cadi teretem formam se colligit, unde  
 Egrediens pennas papilionis habet.  
 Fitque parens tandem, fætumque reponit in ovis  
 Hoc demum extremo munere functus obit.  
 Quotquot in hac nostra spirant animalia terra,  
 Nulli est vel brevior vita, vel utilior.

—♦—

*Innocens Prædatrix.*

Sedula per campos nullo defessa labore,  
 In cella ut stipet mella vagatur apis:  
 Purpurcum vix florem opifex prætervolat unum,  
 Innumeras inter quas alit hortus opes;

Her lucrative task she pursues,  
 And pilfers with so much address,  
 That none of their odour they lose,  
 Nor charm by their beauty the less.

Not thus inoffensively preys  
 The canker-worm ; in-dwelling foe !  
 His voracity not thus allays  
 The sparrow, the finch, or the crow.

The worm, more expensively fed,  
 The pride of the garden devours ;  
 And birds pick the seed from the bed,  
 Still less to be spar'd than the flow'rs.

But she, with such delicate skill,  
 Her pillage so fits for our use,  
 That the chymist in vain with his still  
 Would labour the like to produce.

Then grudge not her temperate meals,  
 Nor a benefit blame as a theft ;  
 Since, stole she not all that she steals,  
 Neither honey, nor wax would be left.

Herbula gramineis vix una innascitur agris,  
 Thesauri unde aliquid non studiosa legit.  
 A flore ad florem transit, mollique volando  
 Delibat tactu suave quod intus habent.  
 Omnia delibat, parce sed et omnia, furti  
 Ut ne vel minimum videris indicium.  
 Omnia degustat tam parce, ut gratia nulla  
 Floribus, ut nullus diminuatur odor.  
 Non ita prædantur modice bruchique et erucæ ;  
 Non ista hortorum maxima pestis aves :  
 Non ita raptores corvi, quorum improba rostra  
 Despoliant agros, effodiuntque sata.  
 Succos immiscens succis, ita suaviter omnes  
 Temperat, ut dederit chymia nulla pares.  
 Vix furtum est illud, dicive injuria debet,  
 Quod cera, et multo melle rependit apīs.

*Denner's Old-Woman.*

In this mimic form of a matron in years,  
 How plainly the pencil of Denner appears!  
 The matron herself, in whose old age we see  
 Not a trace of decline, what a wonder is she!  
 No dimness of eye, and no cheek hanging low!  
 No wrinkle, or deep-furrow'd frown on the brow!  
 Her forehead, indeed, is here circled around  
 With locks like the ribbon with which they are bound;  
 While glossy, and smooth, and as soft as the skin  
 Of a delicate peach, is the down of her chin:  
 But nothing unpleasant, or sad, or severe,  
 Or that indicates life in its winter—is here!  
 Yet all is express'd, with fidelity due,  
 Nor a pimple, or freckle, conceal'd from the view.

Many fond of new sights, or who cherish a taste  
 For the labours of art, to this spectacle haste:  
 The youths all agree, that, could old age inspire  
 The passion of love, her's would kindle the fire:  
 And the matrons, with pleasure, confess that they see  
 Ridiculous nothing, or hideous in thee.

*Denneri Anus.\**

Doctum anus artificem, juste celebrata fatetur,  
 Denneri pinxit quam studiosa manus.  
 Nec stupor est oculis, fronti nec ruga severa,  
 Flaccida nec sulcis pendet utrinque gena.  
 Nil habet illepidum, morosum, aut triste tabella;  
 Argentum capitis præter, anile nihil.  
 Apparent nivæi vittæ sub margine caui.  
 Fila colorati qualia Seres habent.  
 Lanugo mentum, sed quæ tenuissima, vestit;  
 Mollisque, et qualis Persica mala tegit.  
 Nulla vel e minimis fugiunt spiracula visum;  
 At neque lincolis de cutis ulla latet.  
 Spectatum veniunt, novitas quos allicit usquam,  
 Quosque vel ingenii fama, vel artis amor.  
 Adveniunt juvenes; et anus si possit amari,  
 Dennerem, agnoscunt hoc meruisse tuam.

\* Diu publico fuit spectaculo, egregia hæc tabula in area Palatina exteriori, juxta fanam Westmonasteriense.

The nymphs for themselves scarcely hope a decline,  
Oh wonderful woman! as placid as thine.

Strange magic of art! which the youth can engage  
To peruse, half enamour'd, the features of age;  
And force from the virgin a sigh of despair,  
That she, when as old, shall be equally fair!  
How great is the glory that Denner has gain'd,  
Since Apelles not more for his Venus obtain'd!

—

*The Tears of a Painter.*

Apelles, hearing that his boy  
Had just expir'd—his only joy!  
Although the sight with anguish tore him,  
Bade place his dear remains before him.  
He seiz'd his brush, his colours spread;  
And—"Oh! my child, accept"—he said,  
"('Tis all that I can now bestow,  
"This tribute of a father's woe!"  
Then, faithful to the two-fold part,  
Both of his feelings and his art,  
He clos'd his eyes, with tender care,  
And form'd at once a fellow pair.  
His brow, with amber locks beset,  
And lips he drew, not livid yet;  
And shaded all that he had done,  
To a just image of his son.

---

Adveniunt hilares nymphæ; similemque senectam  
Tam pulchram et placidam dent sibi fata, rogant  
Matronæ adveniunt, vetulæque fatentur in ore  
Quod nihil horrendum, ridiculumve vident.  
Quantus honos arti, per quam placet ipsa senectus;  
Quæ facit, ut nymphis invideatur anus!  
Pictori cedit quæ gloria, cum nec Apelli  
Majorem famam det Cytherea suo!

—

*Lacrymæ Pictoris.*

Infantem audivit puerum, sua gaudia, Apelles  
Intempestivo fato obiisse diem.  
Ille, licet tristi percussus imagine mortis,  
Proferri in medium corpus inane jubet.  
Et calamum, et succos poscens, hos accipe luctus,  
Mærorem hunc, dixit, nate, Parentis habe!

Thus far is well. But view again  
 The cause of thy paternal pain !  
 Thy melancholy task fulfil !  
 It needs the last, last touches still.  
 Again his pencil's pow'r he tries,  
 For on his lips a smile he spies ;  
 And still his cheek unfaded shows  
 The deepest damask of the rose.  
 Then, heedful to the finish'd whole,  
 With fondest eagerness he stole,  
 'Till scarce himself distinctly knew  
 The cherub copy'd from the true.

Now, painter, cease ! thy task is done ;  
 Long lives this image of thy son :  
 Nor short-liv'd shall the glory prove,  
 Or of thy labour, or thy love.

---

*The Maze.*

From right to left, and to and fro,  
 Caught in a labyrinth, you go,  
 And turn, and turn, and turn again,  
 To solve the myst'ry, but in vain.

---

Dixit ; et, ut clausit, clausos depinxit ocellos ;  
 Officio pariter fidus utrique pater :  
 Frontemque et crines, nec adhuc pallentia formans  
 Oscula, adumbravit lungubre pictor opus.  
 Perge parens, mærendo tuos expendere luctus ;  
 Nondum opus absolvit triste suprema manus.  
 Vidit adhuc molles genitor super oscula risus ;  
 Vidit adhuc veneres irrubuisse genis.  
 Et teneras raptim veneres, blandosque lepores  
 Et tacitos risus transtulit in tabulam.  
 Pingendo desiste tuum signare dolorem ;  
 Filioli longum vivet imago tui :  
 Vivet et æterna vives tu laude ; nec arte  
 Vincendus pictor nec pietate pater.

---

*Spe Finis.*

Ad dextram, ad loevam, porro, retro, itque reditque,  
 Depremsum in laqueo quem labyrinthus habet.  
 Et legit et relegit gressus, sese explicet unde,  
 Perplexum quærens unde revolvat iter.



Stand still, and breathe, and take from me  
 A clue that soon shall set you free!  
 Not Ariadne, if you met her,  
 Herself could serve you with a better;  
 You enter'd easily—find where—  
 And make with ease your exit there!

—+—

*No Sorrow peculiar to the Sufferer,*

The lover, in melodious verses,  
 His singular distress rehearses,  
 Still closing with the rueful cry,  
 “Was ever such a wretch as I?”  
 Yes! thousands have endur'd before  
 All thy distress; some haply more.  
 Unnumber'd Corydons complain,  
 And Strephons, of the like disdain:  
 And if thy Chloc be of steel,  
 Too deaf to hear, too hard to feel;  
 Not her alone that censure fits,  
 Nor thou alone hast lost thy wits.

—+—

*The Snail.*

To grass, or leaf, or fruit, or wall,  
 The Snail sticks close, nor fears to fall,  
 As if he grew there, house and all  
 together.

---

Sta modo, respira paulum, simul accipe filum;  
 Certius et melius non Ariadne dabit,  
 Sic te, sic solum, expedies errore; viarum  
 Principium invenias, id tibi finis erit.

—+—

*Nemo miser nisi comparatus.*

Quis fuit infelix adeo! quis perditus æque!  
 Conqueritur mæsto carmine tristis amans.  
 Non novus hic questus, rarove auditus; amantes  
 Deserti et spreti mille queruntur idem.  
 Fatum decantas quod tu miserabile, multus  
 Deplorat multo cum Corydone, Strephon.  
 Si tua cum reliquis confertur amica puellis,  
 Non ea vel sola est ferrea, tuve miser.

—+—

*LIMAX.*

Frondebis et pomis, herbisque tenaciter hoeret  
 Limax, et secum portat ubique domum.

Within that house secure he hides,  
 When danger imminent betides,  
 Of storm, or other harm besides  
 of weather.

Give but his horns the slightest touch,  
 His self-collecting power is such,  
 He shrinks into his house, with much  
 displeasure!

Where'er he dwells, he dwells alone,  
 Except himself has chattels none,  
 Well satisfied to be his own  
 whole treasure.

Thus, hermit-like, his life he leads,  
 Nor partner of his banquet needs,  
 And if he meets one, only feeds  
 the faster.

Who seeks him must be worse than blind,  
 (He and his house are so combin'd)  
 If finding it, he fails to find  
 its master.

Tutus in hac sese occultat, si quando periculum  
 Imminent aut subitoe decedit imber aquæ  
 Cornua vel leviter tangas, se protinus in se  
 Colligit, in proprios contrahiturque lares.  
 Secum habitat quacumque habitat; sibi tota suppellex;  
 Solæ, quas adamat, quasque requirit opes.  
 Secum potat, edit, dormit; sibi in oedibus isdem  
 Conviva et comes est, hospes et hospitium.  
 Limacem, quacumque siet, quacumque moretur,  
 (Si quis eum quærat) dixeris esse domi.

## EPIGRAMS

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN OF OWEN.

*On one Ignorant and Arrogant.*

Thou may'st of double ign'rance boast,  
Who know'st not that thou nothing know'st.

*In ignorantem arrogantem  
Linum.*

*Captivum, Line, te tenet ignorantia duplex,  
Scis nihil, et nescis te quoque scire nihil.*

*Prudent Simplicity.*

That thou may'st injure no man, dove-like be,  
And serpent-like, that none may injure thee!

*Prudens Simplicitas.*

*Ut nulli nocuisse velis, imitare columbam:  
Serpentem, ut possit nemo nocere tibi.*

*To a Friend in Distress.*

I wish thy lot, now bad, still worse, my friend,  
For when at worst, they say, things always end!

*Ad Amicum Pauperem.*

*Est male nunc? Utinam in fejus sors omnia vertat,  
Succedunt summis optima sæpe malis.*

When little more than boy in age,  
I deem'd myself almost a sage;  
But now seem worthier to be stil'd,  
For ignorance—almost a child.

*Omnia me dum junior essem, scire putabam,  
Quo scio filius, hoc me nunc scio scire minus.*

*Retaliation.*

The works of ancient Bards divine,  
 Aulus, thou scorn'st to read;  
 And should posterity read thine,  
 It would be strange indeed!

*Lex Talionis.*

*Majorum nunquam, Aule, legis monumenta tuorum:  
 Mirum est, posteritas si tua scripta legat.*

*Sunset and Sunrise.*

Contemplate, when the sun declines,  
 Thy death, with deep reflection;  
 And when again he rising shines,  
 Thy day of resurrection.

*De Ortu et Occasu.*

*Sole oriente, tui reditus a morte memento!  
 Sis memor Occasus, sole cadente, tui!*



## APPENDIX.

(No. 5.)

### *MONTES GLACIALES,*

*In oceano Germanico natantes.*

EN, quæ prodigia, ex oris allata remotis,  
Oras adveniunt pavefacta per æquora nostras!  
Non equidem prisca sæclum rediisse videtur  
Pyrrhæ, cum Proteus pecus altos visere montes  
Et sylvas, egit. Sed tempora vix leviora  
Adsunt, evulsi quando radicibus, alti  
In mare descendunt montes, fluctusque pererrant  
Quid vero hoc monstri est magis et mirabile visu?  
Splendentes video, ceu pulchro ex ære vel auro  
Conflatos, rutilisque accinctos undique gemmis,  
Bacca cærulea, et flammam imitante pyropo.  
Ex oriente adsunt, ubi gazas optima tellus  
Parturit omnigenas, quibus æva per omnia sumptu  
Ingenti finxere sibi diademata reges?  
Vix hoc crediderim. Non fallunt talia acutos  
Mercatorum oculos: prius et quàm littora Gangis  
Liquissent, avidis gratissima præda fuissent.  
Ortos unde putemus? An illos Vesuvius atrox  
Protulit, ignivomisve eiecit faucibus Ætna?  
Luce micant propria, Phæbive, per aëra purum  
Nunc stimulantis equos, argentea tela retorquent?  
Phæbi luce micant. Ventis et fluctibus altis  
Appulsi, et rapidis subter currentibus undis,  
Tandem non fallunt oculos. Capita alta videre est  
Multa onerata nive, et canis conspersa pruinis.  
Cætera sunt glacies. Procul hinc, ubi Bruma fere omnes  
Contristat menses, portenta hæc horrida nobis  
Illa strui voluit. Quoties de culmine summo  
Clivorum fluere in littora prona solutæ  
Sole, nives, propero tendentes in mare cursu,  
Illa gelu fixit. Paulatim attollere sese  
Mirum cæpit opus; glacieque ab origine rerum  
In glaciem aggesta, sublimes vertice tandem



Æquavit montes, non crescere nescia moles.  
 Sic immensa diu stetit, æternumque stetit  
 Congeries, hominum neque vi neque mobilis arte,  
 Littora ni tandem declinia deseruisset,  
 Pondere victa suo. Dilabitur. Omnia circum  
 Antra et saxu gemunt, subito concussa fragore,  
 Dum ruit in pelagum, tanquam studiosa natandi,  
 Ingens tota strues. Sic Delos dicitur olim  
 Insula in Ægæo fluitasse erratica ponto.  
 Sed non ex glacie Delos: neque torpida Delum  
 Bruma inter rupes genuit nudum sterilemque.  
 Sed vestita herbis erat illa, ornataque nunquam  
 Decidua lauro; et Delum dilexit Apollo.  
 At vos, erroneos horrendi et caligini digni,  
 Cimberia Deus idem odit. Natalia vestra,  
 Nubibus involvens frontem, non ille tueri  
 Sustinuit. Patrium vos ergo requirite cælum!  
 Itē! Redite! Timete moras; ni, leniter austro  
 Spirante, et nitidas Phœbo jaculante sagittas  
 Hostili vobis, pereatis gurgite misti!

---

 ON THE ICE ISLANDS.

*Seen floating in the German Ocean.*

What portents, from what distant region, ride,  
 Unseen, till now, in ours, th' astonis'd tide?  
 In ages past, old Proteus, with his droves  
 Of sea-calves, sought the mountains and the groves.  
 But now, descending whence of late they stood,  
 Themselves the mountains, seem to rove the flood.  
 Dire times were they, full-charg'd with human woes,  
 And these, scarce less calamitous than those.  
 What view we now? More wond'rous still! Behold!  
 Like burnish'd brass they shine, or beaten gold;  
 And all around the pearl's pure splendour show,  
 And all around the ruby's fiery glow.  
 Come they from India, where the burning earth,  
 All-bounteous, gives her richest treasures birth;  
 And where the costly gems, that beam around  
 The brows of mightiest potentates, are found?  
 No; never such a countless, dazzling store,  
 Had left unseen the Ganges' peopled-shore.  
 Rapacious hands, and ever watchful eyes,  
 Should sooner far have mark'd, and seiz'd the prize.

Whence sprang they then? Ejected have they come  
 From Ves'vius' or from Ætna's burning womb?  
 Thus shine they, self-illum'd, or but display  
 The borrow'd splendours of a cloudless day?  
 With borrow'd beams they shine. The gales that breathe,  
 Now land-ward, and the current's force beneath,  
 Have borne them nearer: and the nearer sight,  
 Advantag'd more, contemplates them aright.  
 Their lofty summits, crested high, they show,  
 With mingled sleet and long-incumbent snow.  
 The rest is ice. Far hence, where, most severe,  
 Bleak winter well-nigh saddens all the year,  
 Their infant growth began. He bade arise  
 Their uncouth forms, portentous in our eyes.  
 Oft' as, dissolv'd by transient suns, the snow  
 Left the tall cliff, to join the flood below,  
 He caught and curdled, with a freezing blast,  
 The current, ere it reach'd the boundless waste.  
 By slow degrees, uprose the wond'rous pile,  
 And long-successive ages roll'd the while;  
 Till, ceaseless in its growth, it claim'd to stand  
 Tall, as its rival mountains, on the land.  
 Thus stood—and, unremoveable by skill  
 Or force of man, had stood the structure still;  
 But that, though firmly fixt, supplanted yet  
 By pressure of its own enormous weight,  
 It left the shelving beach—and, with a sound  
 That shook the bellowing waves and rocks around,  
 Self-launch'd, and swiftly, to the briny wave,  
 (As if instinct with strong desire to lave)  
 Down went the pond'rous mass. So bards of old,  
 How Delos swam th' Ægean deep, have told.  
 But not of ice was Delos; Delos bore  
 Herb, fruit, and flow'r. She, crown'd with laurel, wore,  
 E'en under wint'ry skies, a summer smile;  
 And Delos was Apollo's fav'rite isle.  
 But, horrid wand'ers of the deep, to you  
 He deems Cimmerian darkness only due:  
 Your hated birth he deign'd not to survey,  
 But scornful turn'd his glorious eyes away.  
 Hence! seek your home; nor longer rashly dare  
 The darts of Phæbus, and a softer air;  
 Lest ye regret, too late, your native coast,  
 In no congenial gulph for ever lost!

## APPENDIX.

(No. 6.)

*I make no apology for the introduction of the following Lines, though I have never learned who wrote them. Their elegance will sufficiently recommend them to persons of classical taste and erudition: and I shall be happy if the English version that they have received from me, be found not to dishonour them. Affection for the memory of the worthy man whom they celebrate alone prompted me to this endeavour.*

W. COWPER.

### VERSES

*To the Memory of Dr. LLORD.*

Spoken at the Westminster Election next after his Decease.

OUR good old friend is gone, gone to his rest,  
Whose social converse was itself a feast;  
O ye of riper years, who recollect  
How once ye lov'd, and eyed him with respect,  
Both in the firmness of his better day,  
While yet he rul'd you with a father's sway,  
And when impair'd by time, and glad to rest,  
Yet still with looks in mild complacence drest,  
He took his annual seat, and mingled here  
His sprightly vein with yours, now drop a tear!  
In morals blameless, as in manners meek,  
He knew no wish, that he might blush to speak.  
But, happy in whatever state below,  
And richer than the rich in being so,  
Obtain'd the hearts of all, and such a meed  
At length from one\* as made him rich indeed.  
Hence then, ye titles, hence, not wanted here!  
Go! garnish merit in a higher sphere,

\* He was usher and under-master of Westminster near fifty years, and retired from his occupation when he was near seventy, with a handsome pension from the king.

The brows of those, whose more exalted lot  
 He could congratulate, but envy'd not!  
 Light lie the turf, good Senior, on thy breast,  
 And tranquil, as thy mind was, be thy rest!  
 Tho' living thou had'st more desert than fame,  
 And not a stone now chronicles thy name!

---

Abiit senex. Periit senex a mabilis,  
 Quo non fuit jucundior.  
 Lugete vos ætas quibus maturior  
 Senem colendum præstitit;  
 Seu quando, viribus valentioribus  
 Firmoque fretus pectore,  
 Florentiori vos juventute excolens  
 Cura fovebat patria,  
 Seu quando, fractus, jamque donatus rude,  
 Vultu sed usque blandulo,  
 Miscere gaudebat suas facetias  
 His annuis leporibus!  
 Vixit probis, puraque simplex indole,  
 Blandisque comis moribus,  
 Et dives æqua mente, charus omnibus,  
 Unius auctus munere.  
 Ite, tituli! Meritis beatoribus  
 Aptate laudes debitas!  
 Nec invidebat ille, si quibus favens  
 Fortuna plus arriserat.  
 Placide senex, levi quiescas cespite,  
 Esti superbum nec vivo tibi  
 Decus sit inditum, nec mortuo  
 Lapis notatus nomine?



## APPENDIX.

(No. 7.)

### *TRANSLATIONS from the FABLES of GAY.*

#### *Lepus Multis Amicus.*

LUSUS amicitia est uni nisi dedita, cen fit,  
Simplice ni nexus fœdere, lusus amor.  
Incerto genitore puer, non sæpe paternæ  
Tutamen novit, deliciasque domus :  
Quique sibi fidos fore multos sperat, amicus  
Mirum est huic misero si ferat ulla opem.

Comis erat mitisque, et nolle et velle paratus  
Cum quovis, Gaii more modoque, lepus ;  
Ille quot in sylvis, et quot spatiantur in agris  
Quadrupedes norat conciliare sibi.  
Et quisque innocuo, invitoque lacessere quenquam  
Labra tenus saltem fidus amicus erat.  
Ortum sub lucis dum pressa cubilia linquit  
Rorantes herbas, pabula sucta, petens,  
Venatorum audit clangores pone sequentum  
Fulmineumque sonum territus erro fugit.  
Corda pavor pulsat, sursum sedet, erigit aures,  
Respicit et sentit jam prope adesse necem.  
Utque canes fallat, late circumvagus, illuc  
Unde abiit mira callidate, redit ;  
Viribus et fractis tandem se projicit ultro  
In media miserum semianimemque via.  
Vix ibi stratus equi sonitum pedis audit, et oh spe  
Quam læta adventum cor agitur equi !  
Dorsum, inquit, mihi, chare, tuum concede, tuoque  
Auxilio nares fallere, vimque canum,  
Me meus, ut nosti, pes prodit—fidus amicus  
Fert quædcunque lubens, nec grave sentit, onus.



Belle miscelle lepuscule! equus respondet, amara  
 Omnia quæ tibi sunt, sunt et amara mihi,  
 Verum age—sume animos—multi, me pone, bonique  
 Adveniunt quorum sis cito salvus ope.  
 Proximus armenti dominus bos sollicitatus  
 Auxilium his verbis se dare posse negat,  
 Quando quadrupedum quot vivunt, nullus amicum  
 Me nescire potest usque fuisse tibi,  
 Libertate æquus, quam cedat amicus amico,  
 Utar, et absque metu ne tibi displiceam;  
 Hinc me mandat amor. Juxta istum messis ascervum  
 Me mea, præ cunctis chara, juvenca manet;  
 Et quis non ultro quæcumque negotia linquit,  
 Pareat ut dominæ, cum vocat ipsa, suæ?  
 Neu me crudelem dicas—discedo—sed hircus  
 (Cujus ope effugias integer) hircus adest.  
 Febrem, ait hircus habes: heu sicca ut lumina languent!  
 Utque caput collo deficiente jacet!  
 Hirsutum mihi tergum; et forsân læserit ægrum,  
 Vellere eris melius fultus, ovisque venit.  
 Me mihi fecit onus natura, ovis inquit anhelans  
 Sustineo lanæ pondera tanta meæ;  
 Me nec velocem nec fortem jacto, solentque  
 Nos etiam sævi dilacerare canes.  
 Ultimus accedit vitulus, vitulumque precatur  
 Ut periturum alias ocyus eripiat.  
 Remne ego respondet vitulus suscepero tantam,  
 Non depulsus adhuc ubere, natus heri?  
 Te quem maturi canibus validique relinquunt  
 Incolumem potero reddere parvus ego?  
 Præterea tollens quem illi aversantur, amicis  
 Forte parum videar consuluisse meis.  
 Ignoscas oro. Fidissima dissociantur  
 Corda, et tale tibi sat liquet esse meum.  
 Ecce autem ad calces canis est! te quanta perempto  
 Tristitia est nobis ingruiura!—Vale!

—•••—

*Avarus et Plutus.*

Icta fenestra Euri flatu stridebat, avarus  
 Ex somno trepidus surgit, opumque memcr.  
 Lata silenter humi ponit vestigia, quemque  
 Respicit ad senitum respiciensque tremit;

Angustissima quæque foramina lampade visit,  
 Ad vectes, obices, fertque refertque manum.  
 Dein reserat crebris junctam compagibus arcam  
 Exultansque omnes conspicit intus opes.  
 Sed tandem furiis ultricibus actus ob artes  
 Quicis sua res tenuis creverat in cumulum,  
 Contortis manibus nunc stat, nunc pectora pulsans  
 Aurum execratur, perniciemque vocat ;  
 O mihi, ait, misero mens quam tranquilla fuisset,  
 Hoc celasset adhuc si modo terra malum !  
 Nunc autem virtus ipsa est venalis ; et aurum  
 Quid contra vitii tormina sæva valet ?  
 O inimicum aurum ! O homini infestissima pestis  
 Cui datur illecebras vincere posse tuas ?  
 Aurum homines suasit contemnere quicquid honestum est,  
 Et præter nomen nil retinere boni.  
 Aurum cuncta mali per terras semina sparsit ;  
 Aurum nocturnis furibus arma dedit.  
 Bella docet fortes, timidosque ad pessima ducit  
 Fœdifragas artes, multiplicisque dolos,  
 Nec vitii quicquam est quod non inveneris ortum  
 Ex malesuada auri sacrilegaque fame.  
 Dixit, et ingenuit ; Plutusque suum sibi numen  
 Ante oculos, ira fervidus ipse stetit.  
 Arcum clausit avarus, et ora horrentia rugis  
 Ostendens, tremulum sic deus increpuit.  
 Questibus his raucis mihi cur, stulte, obstrepis aures ?  
 Ista tui similes tristia quisque canit.  
 Commaculavi egone humanum genus, improbe ? Culpa,  
 Dum rapis et captas omnia, culpa tua est.  
 Mene execrandum censes, quia tam pretiosa  
 Criminibus fiunt perniciosa tuis ?  
 Virtutis specie, pulchro cen pallio amictus  
 Quisque catus nebulo sordida facta tegit.  
 Atque suis manibus commissa potentia, durum  
 Et dirum subito vergit ad imperium.  
 Hinc, nimium dum latro aurum detrudit in arcam,  
 Idem aurum latet in pectore pestis edax.  
 Nutrit avaritiam et fastum, suspendere adunco  
 Suadet naso inopes, et vitium omne docet.  
 Auri et larga probo si copia contigit, instar  
 Roris dilapsi ex æthere cuncta beat :  
 Tum, quasi numen inesset, alit, fovet, educat orbos  
 Et viduas lacrymis ora rigare vetat.

Quo sua crimina jure auro derivet avarus  
 Aurum animæ pretium qui cupit atque capit?  
 Lege parî gladium incuset sicarius atrox  
 Cæso homine, et ferrum judicet esse reum.

---

*Papilio et Limax.*

Qui subito ex imis rerum in fastigia surgit,  
 Nativas sordes, quicquid agatur olet.

---

In closing this series of Cowper's translations, I must not fail to express my concern, that I am unable to present to my reader, according to my intention, a specimen of the *Henriade*, as translated by the poetical brothers.

I had been informed that I should find their production in a Magazine for the year 1759—I have indeed found in a Magazine of that period a version of the poem, but not by the Cowpers; yet their version probably exists, comprised in a periodical publication: but my own researches, and those of a few literary friends, kindly diligent in inquiry, have hitherto been unable to discover it.



## APPENDIX.

(No. 8.)

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*During Cowper's visit to Eartham, he kindly pointed out to me three of his papers in the last volume of the Connoisseur. I inscribed them with his name at the time, and imagine that the readers of his Life may be gratified in seeing them inserted here. I find other numbers of that work ascribed to him; but the three following I print as his, on his own explicit authority. Number 119. Thursday, May 6, 1756.—Number 134. Thursday, August 19, 1756.—Number 138. Thursday, September 16, 1756.*

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### THE CONNOISSEUR.

(NUMBER 119.)

Plenus rimarum sum, huc et illuc perfluo.

TER.

Leaky at bottom; if those chinks you stop,  
In vain—the secret will run o'er at top.

THERE is no mark of our confidence taken more kindly by a friend, than the entrusting him with a secret; nor any which he is so likely to abuse. Confidants in general are like crazy firelocks, which are no sooner charged and cocked, than the spring gives way, and the report immediately follows. Happy to have been thought worthy the confidence of one friend, they are impatient to manifest their importance to another: till, between them and their friend, and their friend's friend, the whole matter is presently known to *all our friends round the wrekin*. The secret catches, as it were by contact, and, like electrical matter, breaks forth from every link in the chain, almost at the same instant. Thus the whole exchange may be thrown into a buz to-morrow by what was whispered in the middle of Marlborough Downs this morning, and in a week's time the streets may ring with the intrigue of a woman of fashion, bellowed out from the foul mouths

of the hawkers, though at present it is known to no creature living but her gallant and her waiting-maid.

As the talent of secrecy is of so great importance to society, and the necessary commerce between individuals cannot be securely carried on without it, that this deplorable weakness should be so general is much to be lamented. You may as well pour water into a funnel, or a seive, and expect it to be retained there, as commit any of your concerns to so slippery a companion. It is remarkable, that in those men who have thus lost the faculty of retention, the desire of being communicative is always most prevalent where it is least justified. If they are intrusted with a matter of no great moment, affairs of more consequence will, perhaps, in a few hours, shuffle it entirely out of their thoughts: but if any thing be delivered to them with an earnestness, a low voice, and the gesture of a man in terror for the consequence of its being known; if the door is bolted, and every precaution taken to prevent surprise, however they may promise secrecy, and however they may intend it, the weight upon their minds will be so extremely oppressive, that it will certainly put their tongues in motion.

This breach of trust, so universal amongst us, is perhaps in great measure owing to our education. The first lesson our little masters and misses are taught is to become blabs and tell-tales: they are bribed to divulge the petty intrigues of the family below stairs to papa and mama in the parlour; and a doll or hobby-horse is generally the encouragement of a propensity which could scarcely be atoned for by a whipping. As soon as children can lisp out the little intelligence they have picked up in the hall, or the kitchen, they are admired for their wit: if the butler has been caught kissing the housekeeper in his pantry, or the footman detected in romping with the chambermaid, away flies little Tommy or Betsy with the news; the parents are lost in admiration of the pretty rogue's understanding, and reward such uncommon ingenuity with a kiss or a sugar-plumb.

Nor does an inclination to secrecy meet with less encouragement at school. The governants at the boarding-school teach miss to be a good girl, and tell them every thing she knows: thus, if any young lady is unfortunately discovered eating a green apple in a corner; if she is heard to pronounce a naughty word, or is caught picking the letters out of another miss's sampler, away runs the chit who is so happy as to get the start of the rest, screams out her information as she goes; and the prudent matron chucks her under the chin, and tells her that she is a good girl, and every body will love her.

The management of our young gentlemen is equally absurd:



In most of our schools, if a lad is discovered in a scrape, the impeachment of an accomplice, as at the Old-Bailey, is made the condition of a pardon. I remember a boy, engaged in robbing an orchard, who was unfortunately taken prisoner in an apple-tree, and conducted, under the strong guard of the farmer and his dairy-maid, to the master's house. Upon his absolute refusal to discover his associates, the pedagogue undertook to lash him out of his fidelity; but finding it impossible to scourge the secret out of him, he at last gave him up for an obstinate villain, and sent him to his father, who told him he was ruined, and was going to disinherit him for not betraying his school-fellows.

I must own I am not fond of thus drubbing our youths into treachery; and am much pleased with the request of Ulysses, when he went to Troy, who begged of those who were to have the care of young Telemachus, that they would, above all things, teach him to be just, sincere, faithful, and to keep a secret.

Every man's experience must have furnished him with instances of confidants who are not to be relied on, and friends who are not to be trusted; but few, perhaps, have thought it a character so well worth their attention, as to have marked out the different degrees into which it may be divided, and the different methods by which secrets are communicated.

Ned Trusty is a tell-tale of a very singular kind. Having some sense of his duty, he hesitates a little at the breach of it. If he engages never to utter a syllable, he most punctually performs his promise; but then he has the knack of insinuating, by a nod and a shrug well-timed, or a seasonable leer, as much as others can convey in express terms. It is difficult, in short, to determine whether he is more to be admired for his resolution in not mentioning, or his ingenuity in disclosing a secret. He is also excellent at a doubtful phrase, as Hamlet calls it, or ambiguous giving out; and his conversation consists chiefly of such broken inuendoes as—"well I know—or I could—and if I would—or, if I list to speak—or there be, and if there might," &c.

Here he generally stops, and leaves it to his hearers to draw proper inferences from these piece-meal premises. With due encouragement, however, he may be prevailed on to slip the padlock from his lips, and immediately overwhelms you with a torrent of secret history, which rushes forth with more violence for having been so long confined.

Poor Meanwell, though he never fails to transgress, is rather to be pitied than condemned. To trust him with a secret is to spoil his appetite, to break his rest, and to deprive him, for a time, of every earthly enjoyment. Like a man who travels with his whole

fortune in his pocket, he is terrified if you approach him, and immediately suspects that you come with a felonious intent to rob him of his charge. If he ventures abroad, it is to walk in some unfrequented place, where he is least in danger of an attack. At home he shuts himself up from his family, paces to and fro his chamber, and has no relief but from muttering over to himself what he longs to publish to the world, and would gladly submit to the office of town-cryer, for the liberty of proclaiming it in the market-place. At length, however, weary of his burden, and resolved to bear it no longer, he consigns it to the custody of the first friend he meets, and returns to his wife with a cheerful aspect, and wonderfully altered for the better.

Careless is, perhaps, equally undesigning, though not equally excusable. Intrust him with an affair of the utmost importance, on the concealment of which your fortune and happiness depend: he hears you with a kind of half attention, whistles a favourite air, and accompanies it with the drumming of his fingers upon the table. As soon as your narration is ended, or perhaps in the middle of it, he asks your opinion of his sword-knot—damns his taylor for having dressed him in a snuff-coloured coat instead of a pompadour, and leaves you in haste to attend an auction; where, as if he meant to dispose of his intelligence to the best bidder, he divulges it with a voice as loud as an auctioneer's; and when you tax him with having played you false, he is heartily sorry for it, but never knew that it was to be a secret.

To these I might add the character of the open and unreserved; who thinks it a breach of friendship to conceal any thing from his intimates; and the impertinent, who having, by dint of observation, made himself master of your secret, imagines he may lawfully publish the knowledge it cost him so much labour to obtain, and considers that privilege as the reward due to his industry. But I shall leave these, with many other characters, which my reader's own experience may suggest to him, and conclude with prescribing, as a short remedy for this evil—that no man may betray the council of his friend, let every man keep his own.

*THE CONNOISSEUR.*

(NUMBER 134.)

Delicta majorum immeritus lues,  
 Romane, donec templa refeceris  
 Ædesque labentia Deorum, et  
 Fæda nigro simulacra fumo.

HOR.

The tottering tow'r and mould'ring walls repair,  
 And fill with decency the house of prayer:  
 Quick to the needy curate bring relief,  
 And deck the parish-church without a brief.

MR. VILLAGE to MR. TOWN.

DEAR COUSIN,

THE country, at present, no less than the metropolis, abounding with politicians of every kind, I begin to despair of picking up any intelligence that might possibly be entertaining to your readers. However, I have lately visited some of the most distant parts of the kingdom, with a clergyman of my acquaintance. I shall not trouble you with an account of the improvements that have been made in the seats we saw, according to the modern taste, but proceed to give you some reflections which occurred to us in observing several country churches, and the behaviour of their congregations.

The ruinous condition of some of these edifices gave me great offence; and I could not help wishing that the honest vicar, instead of indulging his genius for improvements, by enclosing his gooseberry bushes within a Chinese rail, and converting half an acre of his glebe-land into a bowling-green, would have applied part of his income to the more laudable purpose of sheltering his parishioners from the weather during their attendance on divine service. It is no uncommon thing to see the parsonage-house well thatched, and in exceeding good repair, while the church perhaps has scarce any other roof than the ivy that grows over it. The noise of owls, bats, and magpies makes the principal part of the church music in many of these ancient edifices; and the walls, like a large map, seem to be portioned out into capes, seas, and promontories, by the various colours by which the damps have stained them. Sometimes the foundation being too weak to support the steeple any longer, it has been found expedient to pull down that part of the

building, and to hang the bells under a wooden shed on the ground beside it. This is the case in a parish in Norfolk, through which I lately passed, and where the clerk and the sexton, like the two figures of St. Dunstan's, serve the bells in capacity of clappers, by striking them alternately with a hammer.

In other churches I have observed that nothing unseemly or ruinous is to be found, except in the clergyman, and the appendages of his person. The 'squire of the parish, or his ancestors, perhaps, to testify their devotion, and leave a lasting monument of their magnificence, have adorned the altar-piece with the richest crimson velvet, embroidered with vine-leaves and ears of wheat; and have dressed up the pulpit with the same splendour and expense; while the gentleman who fills it is exalted, in the midst of all this finery, with a surplice as dirty as a farmer's frock, and a periwig that seems to have transferred its faculty of curling to the band, which appears in full buckle beneath it.

But if I was concerned to see several distressed pastors, as well as many of our country churches, in a tottering condition, I was more offended with the indecency of worship in others. I could wish that the clergy would inform their congregations, that there is no occasion to scream themselves hoarse in making the responses; that the town-cryer is not the only person qualified to pray with due devotion; and that he who bawls the loudest may nevertheless be the wickedest fellow in the parish. The old women, too, in the aisle might be told, that their time would be better employed in attending to the sermon, than in fumbling over their tattered testaments till they have found the text; by which time the discourse is near drawing to a conclusion: while a word or two of instruction might not be thrown away upon the younger part of the congregation, to teach them that making posies in summer time, and cracking nuts in autumn, is no part of the religious ceremony.

The good old practice of psalm-singing is, indeed, wonderfully improved in many country churches since the days of Sternhold and Hopkins; and there is scarce a parish clerk who has so little taste as not to pick his staves out of the new version. This has occasioned great complaints in some places, where the clerk has been forced to bawl by himself, because the rest of the congregation cannot find the psalm at the end of their prayer-books; while others are highly disgusted at the innovation, and stick as obstinately to the old version as to the old style.

The tunes themselves have also been new set to jiggish measures, and the sober drawl which used to accompany the two first staves of the hundredth Psalm, with the Gloria Patri, is now split.



into as many quavers as an Italian air. For this purpose there is in every country an itinerant band of vocal musicians, who make it their business to go round to all the churches in their turns, and after a prelude with the pitch-pipe, astonish the audience with hymns set to the new Winchester measure, and anthems of their own composing.

As these new-fashioned psalmodists are necessarily made up of young men and maids, we may naturally suppose that there is a perfect concord and symphony between them: and, indeed, I have known it happen, that these sweet singers have more than once been brought into disgrace by too close an unison between the thorough-bass and the treble.

It is a difficult matter to decide which is looked upon as the greatest man in a country church, the parson or his clerk. The latter is most certainly held in the higher veneration, where the former happens to be only a poor curate, who rides post every Sabbath from village to village, and mounts and dismounts at the church-door. The clerk's office is not only to tag the prayers with an amen, or usher in the sermon with a stave; but he is also the universal father to give away the brides, and the standing god-father to all the new-born bantlings. But, in many places, there is still a greater man belonging to the church than either the parson or the clerk himself. The person I mean is the 'squire, who, like the king, may be styled head of the church in his own parish. If the benefice be in his own gift, the vicar is his creature, and, of consequence, entirely at his devotion: or if the care of the church be left to a curate, the Sunday-fees, roast-beef and plumb-pudding, and the liberty to shoot in the manor, will bring him as much under the 'squire's command as his dogs and horses.

For this reason, the bell is often kept tolling, and the people waiting in the church-yard, an hour longer than the usual time; nor must the service begin till the 'squire has strutted up the aisle and seated himself in the great pew in the chancel. The length of the sermon is also measured by the will of the 'squire, as formerly by the hour glass; and I know one parish where the preacher has always the complaisance to conclude his discourse, however abruptly, the minute that the 'squire gives the signal by rising up after his nap.

In a village church, the 'squire's lady, or the vicar's wife, are perhaps the only females that are stared at for their finery; but in the large cities and towns, where the newest fashions are brought down weekly by the stage-coach, or waggon, all the wives and daughters of the most topping tradesmen vie with each other, every Sunday, in the elegance of their apparel. I could even trace



their gradations in their dress, according to the opulence, the extent, and the distance of the place from London. I was at church in a populous city in the north, where the mace-bearer cleared the way for Mrs. Mayoress, who came sidling after him in an enormous fan-hoop, of a pattern which had never been seen before in those parts. At another church, in a corporation town, I saw several *negligees*, with furbellowed aprons, which had long disputed the prize of superiority: but these were most woefully eclipsed by a burges's daughter, just come from London, who appeared in a *trolloppe* or *slammerkin*, with treble ruffles to the cuffs, pinked and gyped, and the sides of the petticoat drawn up in festoons. In some lesser borough towns, the contest I found lay between three or four black and green bibs and aprons. At one a grocer's wife attracted our eyes by a new fashion cap, called a *joan*, and at another, they were wholly taken up by a mercer's daughter in a nun's hood.

I need not say any thing of the behaviour of the congregations in these more polite places of religious resort; as the same genteel ceremonies are practised there as at the most fashionable churches in town. The ladies, immediately on their entrance, breathe a pious ejaculation through their fan-sticks, and the beaux very gravely address themselves to the haberdashers' bills, glewed upon the lining of their hats. This pious duty is no sooner performed than the exercise of bowing and curtesying succeeds; the locking and unlocking of the pews drowns the reader's voice at the beginning of the service; and the rustling of silks, added to the whispering and tittering of so much good company, renders him totally unintelligible to the very end of it.

I am, dear cousin, yours, &c.

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### THE CONNOISSEUR.

(NUMBER 138.)

Servata semper lege et ratione loquendi.

Juv.

Your talk to decency and reason suit,  
Not prate like fools, or gabble like a brute.

IN the comedy of the Frenchman in London, which we are told was acted at Paris with universal applause for several nights together, there is a character of a rough Englishman, who is represented as quite unskilled in the graces of conversation, and his dia-

logue consists almost entirely of a repetition of the common salutation of, *How do you do? how do you do?* Our nation has, indeed, been generally supposed to be of a sullen and uncommunicative disposition; while, on the other hand, the loquacious French have been allowed to possess the art of conversing beyond all other people. The Englishman requires to be wound up frequently, and stops very soon; but the Frenchman runs on in a continued alarm. Yet it must be acknowledged, that as the English consist of very different humours, their manner of discourse admits of great variety: but the whole French nation converse alike; and there is no difference in their address between a marquis and a valet de chambre. We may frequently see a couple of French barbers accosting each other in the street, and paying their compliments with the same volubility of speech, the same grimace, and action, as two courtiers in the *Thuilleries*.

I shall not attempt to lay down any particular rules for conversation, but rather point out such faults in discourse and behaviour as render the company of half mankind rather tedious than amusing. It is in vain, indeed, to look for conversation where we might expect to find it in the greatest perfection, among persons of fashion; there it is almost annihilated by universal card-playing; insomuch, that I have heard it given as a reason, why it is impossible for our present writers to succeed in the dialogue of genteel comedy, that our people of quality scarce ever meet but to game. All their discourse turns upon the odd trick, and the four honours, and it is no less a maxim with the votaries of whist than with those of *Bacchus*, that talking spoils company.

Every one endeavours to make himself as agreeable to society as he can; but it often happens that those who most aim at shining in conversation overshoot their mark. Though a man succeeds, he should not (as is frequently the case) engross the whole talk to himself, for that destroys the very essence of conversation, which is talking together. We should try to keep up conversation like a ball bandied to and fro from one to another, rather than seize it ourselves, and drive it before us like a foot-ball. We should likewise be cautious to adapt the matter of our discourse to our company, and not to talk Greek before ladies, or of the last new fur-below to a meeting of country justices.

But nothing throws a more ridiculous air over our whole conversation than certain peculiarities, easily acquired, but very difficultly conquered and discarded. In order to display these absurdities in a truer light, it is my present purpose to enumerate such of them as are most commonly to be met with; and first, to take notice of those buffoons in society, the attitudinarians and face-ma-

kers. These accompany every word with a peculiar grimace or gesture: they assent with a shrug, and contradict with a twisting of the neck; are angry with a wry mouth, and pleased in a caper or a minuet step. They may be considered as speaking harlequins; and their rules of eloquence are taken from the posture-master. These should be condemned to converse only in dumb show with their own person in the looking-glass; as well as the smirkers and smilers, who so prettily set off their faces, together with their words by a *je-ne-scai-quoi* between a grin and a dimple. With these we may likewise rank the affected tribe of mimics, who are constantly taking off the peculiar tone of voice or gesture of their acquaintance; though they are such wretched imitators, that (like bad painters) they are frequently forced to write the name under the picture before we can discover any likeness.

Next to these, whose elocution is absorbed in action, and who converse chiefly with their arms and legs, we may consider the profest speakers. And first, the emphatical; who squeeze, and press, and ram down every syllable with excessive vehemence and energy. These orators are remarkable for their distinct elocution and force of expression; they dwell on the important particles *of* and *the*, and the significant conjunctive *and*; which they seem to hawk up with much difficulty out of their own throats, and to cram them with no less pain into the ears of their auditors.

These should be suffered only to syringe (as it were) the ears of a deaf man, through an hearing trumpet: though, I must confess, that I am equally offended with whisperers or low speakers, who seem to fancy all their acquaintance deaf, and come up so close to you, that they may be said to measure noses with you, and frequently overcome you with the exhalations of a powerful breath. I would have these oracular gentry obliged to talk at a distance through a speaking trumpet, or apply their lips to the walls of a whispering gallery. The wits, who will not condescend to utter any thing but a *bon mot*, and the whistlers, or tune-hummers, who never articulate at all, may be joined very agreeably together in concert; and to these tinkling cymbals I would also add the sounding brass, the bawler, who inquires after your health with the bellowing of a town-cryer.

The tatlers, whose pliable pipes are admirably adapted to the "soft parts of conversation," and sweetly "pratling out of fashion," make very pretty music from a beautiful face and a female tongue: but from a rough manly voice and coarse features, mere nonsense is as harsh and dissonant as a jig from an hurdy-gurdy. The swearers I have spoken of in a former paper; but the half-swearers, who split, and mince, and fritter their oaths into *gad's-*

*but, ad's-fish, and demme*; the Gothic humbuggers, and those who "nick-name God's creatures," and call a man a cabbage, a crab, a queer cub, an odd fish, and an unaccountable *muskin*, should never come into company without an interpreter. But I will not tire my reader's patience, by pointing out all the pests of conversation; nor dwell particularly on the sensibiles, who pronounce dogmatically on the most trivial points, and speak in sentences; the wonderers, who are always wondering what o'clock it is, or wondering whether it will rain or no, or wondering when the moon changes; the phraseologists, who explain a thing by *all that*, or enter into particulars with *this, that, and t'other*; and, lastly, the silent men, who seem afraid of opening their mouths, lest they should catch cold, and literally observe the precept of the gospel, by letting their conversation be only yea yea, and nay nay.

The rational intercourse kept up by conversation, is one of our principal distinctions from brutes. We should therefore endeavour to turn this peculiar talent to our advantage, and consider the organs of speech as the instruments of understanding. We should be very careful not to use them as the weapons of vice, or tools of folly, and do our utmost to unlearn any trivial or ridiculous habits, which tend to lessen the value of such an inestimable prerogative. It is, indeed, imagined by some philosophers, that even birds and beasts (though without the power of articulation) perfectly understand one another by the sounds they utter; and that dogs and cats, &c. have each a particular language to themselves, like different nations. Thus it may be supposed, that the nightingales of Italy have as fine an ear for their own native wood-notes as any signor or signora for an Italian air; that the boars of Westphalia gruntle as expressively through the nose as the inhabitants in High-German; and that the frogs in the dykes of Holland croak as intelligibly as the natives jabber their Low Dutch. However this may be, we may consider those whose tongues hardly seem to be under the influence of reason, and do not keep up the proper conversation of human creatures, as imitating the language of different animals. Thus, for instance, the affinity between chatterers and monkeys, and praters and parrots, is too obvious not to occur at once: Grunters and growlers may be justly compared to hogs; snarlers are curs; and the *spitfire passionate* are a sort of wild-cats that will not bear stroaking, but will pur when they are pleased. Complainers are screech-owls; and story-tellers, always repeating the same dull note, are cuckows. Poets, that prick up their ears at their own hideous braying, are no better than asses; critics in general are venomous serpents, that delight in hissing; and some of them who have got by heart a few technical



terms, without knowing their meaning, are no other than magpies, I myself, who have crowed to the whole town for near three years past, may, perhaps, put my readers in mind of a dunghill cock; but as I must acquaint them, that they will hear the last of me on this day fortnight, I hope they will then consider me as a swan, who is supposed to sing sweetly in his dying moments.





MOTTO ON A CLOCK,  
*With a Translation by the Editor.*

Quæ lenta accedit, quam velox præterit hora!  
 Ut capias, patiens esto, sed esto vigil!

*Slow comes the hour; its passing speed how great!  
 Waiting to seize it—vigilantly wait!*



*Cowper's tame Hares.*

## CONCLUSION.

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Astanti sat erit si dicam sim tibi curæ :

\* \* \* \* \*

Forsitan et nostros ducat de marmore vultus  
Nectens aut paphia myrti, aut parnasside lauri  
Fronde comas, at ego segura pace quiescam.

MILTONI MANSUS.

*I shall but need to say, be yet my friend:  
He too, perhaps, shall bid the marble breathe  
To honour me; and with the graceful wreath,  
Or of Parnassus, or the Paphian Isle,  
Shall bind my brows—but I shall rest the while.*

COWPER'S TRANSLATION.



THE  
CONCLUSION.

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THOUGH it seems unnecessary to enumerate the many public compliments that have been paid, by a variety of writers, to the poetical excellence of Cowper, I must not fail to notice a private tribute to his merit, which the kindness of a distant friend transmitted to me while these volumes were in the press.

In the form of a letter, to an accomplished author of Ireland, it comprizes a series of extensive observations on the poetry of my departed friend; observations so full of taste and feeling, that I hope the judicious writer will, in a season of leisure, revise, extend, and convert them into a separate monument to the memory of the poet, whom he is worthy to praise.

Being favoured with the liberty of using, in this publication, the manuscript I have mentioned, I shall select from it a passage relating both to Milton and to Cowper, as an introduction to the proposal in honour of the two illustrious and congenial poets, with which I have already promised to close this address to the public.

After many forcible remarks on the moral spirit of poetry, and a quotation from Lowth on its end and efficacy, the animated critic proceeds in the following words.

“The noblest benefits and delights of poetry can be but rarely produced, because all the requisites for producing them so very seldom meet. A vivid mind, and happy imitative power, may enable a poet to form glowing pictures of virtue, and almost produce in himself a short-lived enthusiasm of goodness; but although even these transient and factitious movements of mind may serve to produce grand and delightful effusions of poetry, yet when the best of these are compared with the poetic productions of a genuine lover of virtue, a discerning judgment will scarcely fail to mark the difference. A simplicity of conception and expression—a conscious, and therefore unaffected dignity—an instinctive adherence to sober reason, even amid the highest flights—an uniform justness and consistency of thought—a glowing, yet temperate ardour of feeling—a peculiar felicity, both in the choice and combination of terms, by which even the plainest words acquire the

truest character of eloquence, and which is rarely to be found, except where a subject is not only intimately known, but cordially loved; these, I conceive, are the features peculiar to the real votary of virtue, and which must, of course, give to his strains a perfection of effect never to be attained by the poet of inferior moral endowments.

I believe it will be readily granted, that all these qualities were never more perfectly combined than in the poetry of *Milton*; and I think, too, there will be little doubt, that the next to him, in every one of these instances, beyond all comparison, is *Cowper*. The genius of the latter did certainly not lead him to emulate the songs of the seraphim. But though he pursues a lower walk of poetry than his great master, he appears no less the enraptured votary of pure unmixed goodness. Nay, perhaps he may, in this one respect, possess some peculiar excellences, which may make him seem more the bard of Christianity. That divine religion infinitely exalts, but it also deeply humbles the mind it inspires. It gives majesty to the thoughts, but it impresses meekness on the manners, and diffuses tenderness through the feelings. It combines sensibility with fortitude—the lowliness of the child with the magnanimity of the hero.

The grandest features of the Christian character were never more gloriously exemplified than in that spirit which animates the whole of *Milton's* poetry. His own *Michael* does not impress us with the idea of a purer or more awful virtue than that which we feel in every portion of his majestic verse; and he no less happily indicates the source from which his excellence was derived, by the bright beams which he ever and anon reflects upon us from the sacred scriptures. But the milder graces of the gospel are certainly less apparent. What we behold is so awful, it might almost have inspired a wish, that a spirit equally pure and heavenly might be raised to illustrate, with like felicity, the more attractive and gentler influences of our divine religion.

In *Cowper*, above any poet that ever lived, would such a wish seem to be fulfilled. In his charming effusions, we have the same spotless purity—the same elevated devotion—the same vital exercise of every noble and exalted quality of the mind—the same devotedness to the sacred scriptures, and to the peculiar doctrines of the gospel: the difference is, that instead of an almost repressive dignity, we have the sweetest familiarity—instead of the majestic grandeur of the Old Testament, we have the winning graces of the New—instead of those thunders by which angels were discomfited, we have, as it were, “the still small voice” of Him who was meek and lowly of heart.

May we not then venture to assert, that from that spirit of devoted piety which has rendered both these great men liable to the charge of religious enthusiasm, but which, in truth, raised the minds of both to a kind of happy residence,

“ In regions mild, of calm, and serene air,  
 “ Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot  
 “ Which men call Earth,”

a peculiar character has been derived to the poetry of them both, which distinguishes their compositions from those of almost all the world besides? I have already enumerated some of the superior advantages of a truly virtuous poet, and presumed to state, that these are realized, in an unexampled degree, in Milton and Cowper. That they both owed this moral eminence to their *vivid sense of religion*, will, I conceive, need no demonstration, except what will arise to every reader of taste and feeling on examining their works. It will here, I think, be seen at once, that that sublimity of conception, that delicacy of virtuous feeling, that majestic independence of mind, that quick relish for all the beauties of nature, at once so pure, and so exquisite, which we find ever occurring in them both, could not have existed in the same unrivalled degree, if their devotion had been less intense, and, of course, their minds more dissipated amongst low and distracting objects.”

In printing this brief specimen from the manuscript of a modest writer, who is personally unknown to me, I hope I may lead him to make, for his own honour, a more extensive use of his production. His eloquent remarks on the congeniality of mind between Milton and Cowper, may, possibly, induce some readers to favour my intention of rendering Milton a contributor to the posthumous honours of Cowper, by the following proposal.

My departed friend having expressed a wish to me that an edition of Milton might be formed, in which our respective writings concerning him should appear united, I hope to accomplish that affectionate desire. If the public favour my idea, the whole profits of the book will be applied to the purpose of raising a marble MONUMENT in the metropolis, to Cowper, by the sculptor whose genius he particularly regarded, my friend Mr. Flaxman. The proposed edition is to contain Cowper's admirable translations from the Latin and Italian poetry of Milton, and all that is preserved of that unfinished Commentary, which he intended to continue and complete as a series of Dissertations on the Paradise Lost.



It is proposed that Cowper's Milton (for so I wish the edition to be called) shall consist of three quarto volumes, decorated with various engravings, at the price of six guineas; and those who intend to contribute in this manner to a national monument, in memory of Cowper, are requested to deposit their subscriptions either with Mr. JOHNSON, bookseller, of St. Paul's, or with Mr. EVANS, bookseller, of Pall-Mall.

As many persons may be inclined to subscribe to Cowper's monument, without subscribing to the intended Milton, it is presumed such persons will be gratified in being informed, that the two booksellers above-mentioned will receive any smaller sum as a contribution to the monument, and either faithfully devote whatever may be received to that purpose, or return the sum so advanced to every subscriber, if the purpose should be relinquished: It may, however, be reasonably hoped, that a purpose where the feelings of national esteem and love are so perfectly in unison with those of private friendship, will be happily accomplished, and that many who feel how justly the pre-eminent character of Cowper is endeared to our country, will delight in contributing to perpetuate his renown, by the most honourable memorial of public affection.

FINIS.

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